Mārg

Treasures of Everyday Art

RAJA DINKAR KELKAR MUSEUM

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Ganesh seated on his vahana rat, in bronze

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MĀRG *A Magazine of the Arts*

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by Jutta-Jain Neubauer

COVER: A brass lamp with the image of Surya, the Sun-God, riding a chariot.

MARG proudly offers Homage to Shri Dinkar Kelkar, Founder-Director of the Museum of Everyday Art, assembled by him through the devotion of half a century. The text for this volume, in appreciation of the various artefacts has been written by Dr. Jyotindra Jain and Smt. Jutta Jain Neubauer.

Colour and black and white photographs are by Dolly Sahiar and Rehana.

MARG acknowledges the courtesy of Shri Dinkar Kelkar in giving us the liberty of the 'wonder house' and allowing photography of objects, as well as for giving information on the various items of this fascinating collection.

MARG hopes that the highest skill represented in the making of the objects will become a legacy for future generations.

Articles, photographs and drawings sent with a view to publication will be carefully considered, but the editors will not undertake responsibility for loss or damage. All articles and illustrations should bear the name and address of the sender, and postage should be sent to cover their return.

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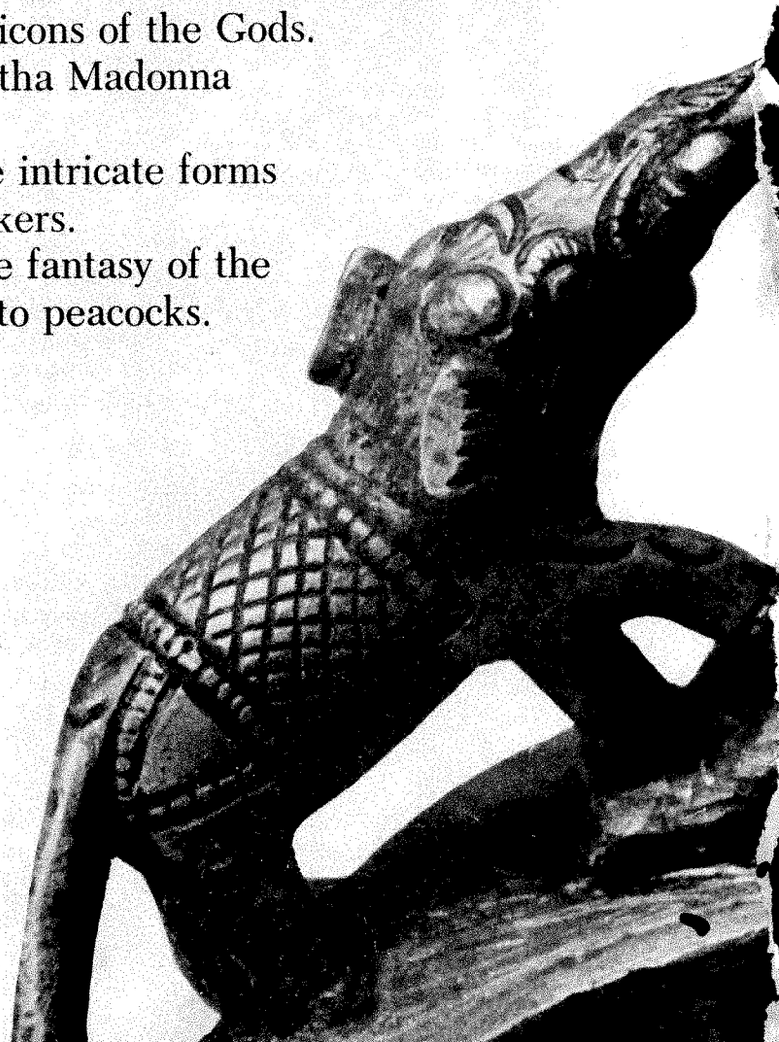
Homage to Dinkar Kelkar

A great little man!
— that is the spontaneous exclamation which comes from us
when we see the 83-year-old young man,
Dinkar Kelkar,
come up from within the inner sanctum
of his museum.

It is the natural wish of every visitor,
who goes through the fantastic 'wonder house',
in which one room opens into another and insinuates itself
into a third in a sur-realist composition,
to see the maker of this dreamworld.

We have passed through
the carved doors of old houses.
We have seen the carved projections of windows.
We have noticed the elaborate
mandala-like *divas* of brass,
and the hanging oil lamps with chains of bronze.
We have contemplated the icons of the Gods.
We have admired the Maratha Madonna
with the child.
We have been dazed by the intricate forms
of the hundreds of nut-crackers.
We have been struck by the fantasy of the
elaborate Veenas turned into peacocks.



1. A dramatic detail of Gaja-lakshmi lamp being bathed by two elephants.
South India, c. early 20th century.

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We have been overwhelmed by the proliferation of forms
that Dinkar Kelkar has collected from the villages,
the small towns and obscure settlements
of tribal people of our country.

We are told that he has done it all,
single-handed,
by travelling thousands of miles,
with the persistence of a humble searcher,
the devotion of a *bhakta*,
and the unerring eye of a connoisseur of novelty in forms.
And we join hands to him in worship.

He is a modest little man.
His light frame, clad simply in kurta-dhoti,
is vibrant even at his advanced age,
as he leads you to a new acquisition.
His eyes light up with joy
at his own discoveries.

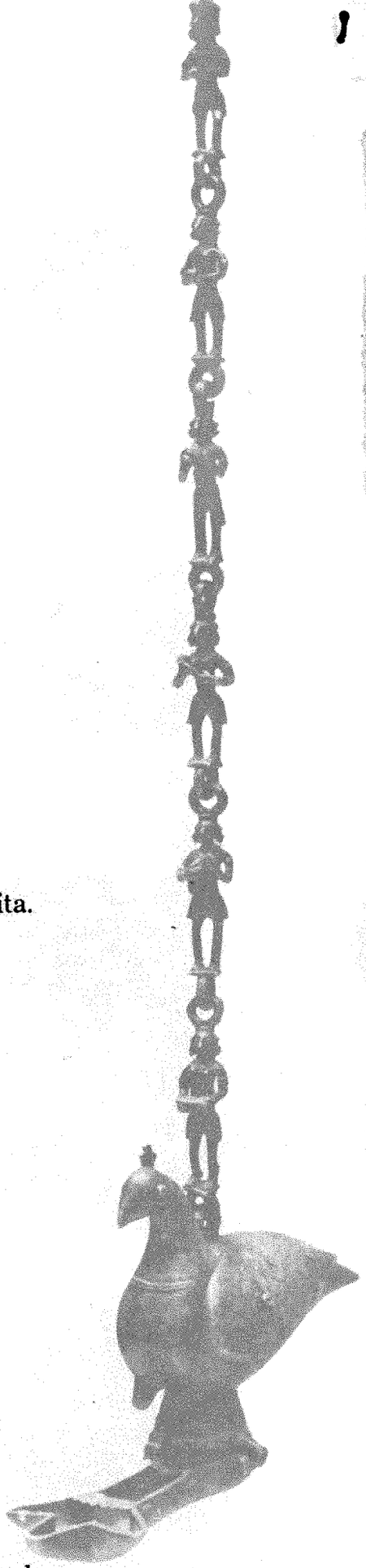
He mutters the name of the place
where he found a particular Durga.
Impetuously, he shows another figurine in clay
which he picked up in some fair.
And before we have taken the object in,
he points to a wild toy horse
brought from a ruined palace nursery.
Seeing the sense of wonder in our eyes,
he sits us down on a carved settee,
brought from some old Parsi home.
And while a furtive movement
brings his demure, kindly and gentle spouse
with cups of tea and something to eat,
he opens a packet of Paithan Paintings of *Ramayana*,
in which we recognise the puppet shapes of Andhra
transformed by the Maharashtrian craftsmen
into a sturdy Rama
and more than demoniac Ravana and a gazelle-like Sita.
Before we have finished absorbing this set,
he shows us a vision in glass painting
of the lovely Mastani Begum
done in the Karnatak style.
As we wish to absorb all that we have seen,
we stop looking, drink the tea and ask the question
which everyone asks:

'How did you get all these things?'

He evades the answer and says:
'I have a free Railway Pass.
I am going to Kutch tomorrow
—next Friday, I will be in Hyderabad.
At the end of the week, I shall be in Tamil Nadu.
Back home in a truck,
which is being sent by a generous patron!'

We come away bent-headed,
with love and admiration for him in our hearts.

And, in retrospect, we feel reassured that,
in spite of the restless, grasping, unhappy world around us
there is, in our midst,
a haven where this pioneer, and ardent pilgrim,
Dinkar Kelkar, has 'shored the remnants' of our people's culture
against our ruin—
in one of the richest museums of folk art in the world.



The House

In the every-day life of our land, our people tried to create a whole full day against the torpor and ennui of routine, by evolving a ritual in which every act became holy. This was sanctified by the proverbial wisdom of the folk in the saying:

'The owls sleep through day and night
while the lark sings. . .'

This practice of *creating* a whole day may have had its sanctions in the daily ritual magic of early man, who had to eke out a living out of nature, when he had to beckon his will to cast a spell on the bison to be hunted, by drawing the picture of the hunt and shrieking incantations in front of it before going out to kill. And the Vedic prayers to the sun, the sky, and the invocations for the grant of this, that, or the other boon, in the *Atharva* Veda, were urged by man's recognition that, in this vast universe, a comparatively small animal, only recently evolved into walking on two legs, talking, wishing and hoping against despair, could achieve the good life by making magic, using amulets and other protections against evil and performing ceremonies to appease the Gods.

So in the *Gṛhst*, family life, almost every waking hour has been ennobled by uplifting the heart, by releasing the rhythms of the body-soul against the physical perils, influences of weather and fluctuations of moods, by inspiring each person to higher rhythms.

In fact, living, working, leisure and recreation, were all governed by the recognition of the fact that our various moods reflect our body-soul rhythms.

Thus the cave was chosen to ensure privacy and to imbibe the good air through the big opening and to be near the food to be gathered.

The thatched hut was constructed against the heat and the cold, while the body was exposed to the refreshing elements during work in the fields in the stage of civilisation when food-gathering gave place to agriculture. The house, made of wood and brick and straw, was made when the needs grew and more pliable materials were secured.

The haveli of the family, which acquired more worldly goods, was elaborated into various functional compartments for the family of many members.

The palace was more complex insofar as it housed the Raja, who claimed to have divine powers by virtue of his physical prowess, martial abilities and mental capacity for organising defence, public works and the rule of law.

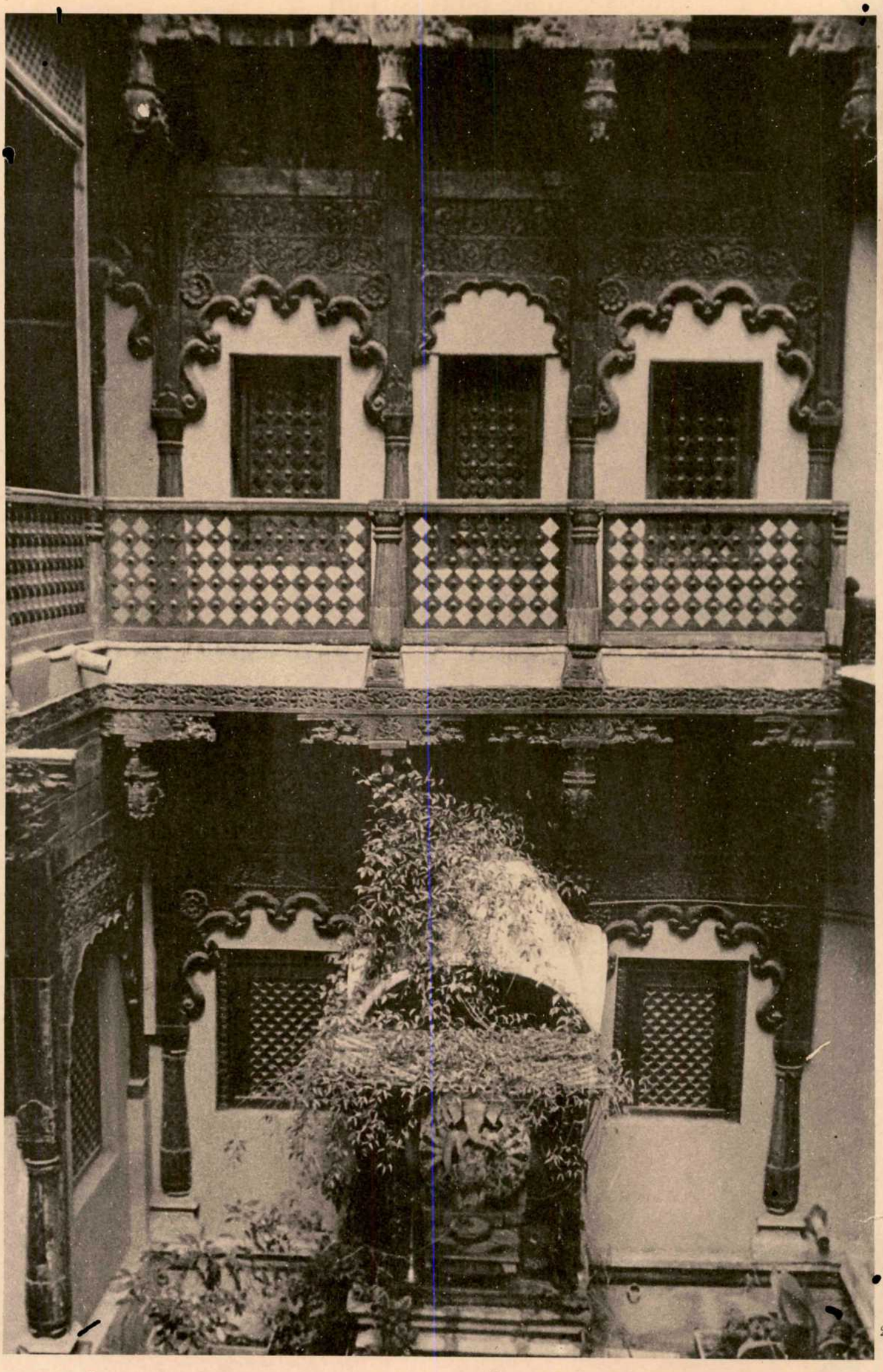
The inner sanctum of the temple was always modelled on the peasant's hut, only being constructed in more permanent materials, of wood, or stone, or brick, or rock-cut, for the sacred purpose.

In the house, which was as much the body and soul of god as the shrine, the divinity was put in the alcove. Prayers had to be made to the symbolic presence of the unknown powers for blessings every morning.

These divinities multiplied in time, till they came to constitute a pantheon of nature powers, and later became symbols of every energy and rhythmic splendour.

Each family, sometimes a whole village, and often a whole kingdom, worshipped a common favourite deity.

In the life of habit, in the ritual of daily existence, it was thus—each to his own body-soul rhythm, individual and yet part of the family, the community and the kingdom. The balance was always uneasy. And yet certain important values were observed as an unwritten code of conduct which preferred civilisation to barbarism.



Dimly aware of the invisible rhythms, which receive the impact of the outer phenomena, the transformation of life begins by cultivating those habits which may awaken us to awareness. This is a kind of *karma*, or evolution or interaction, which is supposed to renew the personality every day.

The *junglepani*, or the walk in the heart of nature, to intake the fresh odour of dew, is the beginning of the day's yoga.

The bath in the running water, which has washed seven rocks, closes the pores, later to be opened by brisk scrubbing.

The songs, recited by men and women during and after the ablutions, are supposed to create the mood for exalting the body-soul above the elements.

The Shehnai strains, released in the early morning, are said to create the resonance in the deepest depths.

The lotus of the soul, which has been closed in sleep all night, begins to open with the day.

The symbol of this awakening, in painted images, is the female goddess Saraswati, who sits on the open lotus playing the Veena and beckoning all creation to listen. The atmosphere is charged by the sky with red streaks of the morning and the enlivening greens, and the quickenings of birds, beasts and flowers.

The prayers before the mandala, with the muttering of a favourite hymn, unconsciously urges acceptance of earth, water, fire and air, even as the personality is energised.

Not many habitual prayer-makers realise that the Brahmins had mythified evolution: Man has evolved from the boar, the lion, to the peasant and the God King Rama, by dint of the hightened consciousness. And most human beings are supposed to be aware of the need to grow through the cycle of days and nights, by the inhale of breath, through deliberate physical and mental exercises, specially putting the deeper life-breath from the air into themselves. Their eyes are supposed to glisten, the thousand petals of the brain are supposed to open up, and the juices of the body are said to flow.

Of course, the vast majority of men and women have made their own shorthand ritual and substituted worship of work for prayer.

Work as worship started by daubing the tools with the sacred saffron mark. The plough was so sanctified, as well as the bullock's forehead. The handle of the hammer had a sacred tassel tied to it. There was a ceremony for the sanctification of the pen and inkpot. The coconut had to be broken on the wheel of the bullock-cart before it was plied for the first time. The sword was annointed before warriors went to the battlefield. The elephants were decorated before they joined the battle army. The white horse of the General had a *tikka* put on his forehead, before the Commander led the army. The hands were joined to the image of Ganesha on top of the doorway of the shop before buying and selling could begin. The musical instruments were blessed before being played. The dancer touched the guru's feet before beginning to dance. In fact, everything was made holy to give depth to the creative life.

2. *A section of the house and Museum of Shri Dinkar Kelkar with woodwork transplanted from the original Mahal of Mastani Begum, near Pune.*

During the leisure hours the deepening was through song and dance and play. The source of magic was supposed to lie in the first inspired utterance, *Sruti*—the inspiration given by God. The dance was the *katha* (racital) of a myth about the ripening of the harvest, and thus, originally, an invocation to the Gods. The prologue of the play was to appease the divinity.

In actual practice the religious motif became ritualistic habit, or maybe secular impulse, informed by dim awareness of the original inspiration given by the gods. And all creations tended to become decorations.

The decoration of every object involved the assimilation of nature forces. The tree itself became the symbol of life. The flowers entered into the design of cloth, woodwork and metal. Shrubberies became lyrical foliage patterns. Birds, specially the parrot, as the imitator of human voice, with the lyrical grace of its form, entered into floral patterns. The snake or *naga*, which has been worshipped as the sinuous curvacious flow of the soul, was incarnated in stone, woodwork and fabric. The lion, as the king of the jungle, represented the majestic power of the monarch. The fish was the image of fertility. The elephant was wisdom personified. The horse was speed itself. The peacock was the acme of joy, as it spread its tail in a graceful display of the many-coloured fan of its feathers.

All the utilities, the fundamental objects, and purposive acts of creation, became artefacts in the hands of the craftsmen, made with the aspiration to the highest skill.

Vishwakarma was the God of the artisans. And to attain the perfection of handiwork, as this legendary deity had done, was the consciously accepted ideal. The work of art was supposed already to have been revealed by him. The craftsmen only had to discover it. This myth was always present in the consciousness of the brotherhoods of handicraft workers. Not all of them, however, succeeded in becoming gods and discovering the revelation. But a sufficient number of them, with unique talents, were able to create shapes and designs of such intricate workmanship and fantasy that they seem to be inspired by the dream life in which the gods have talked to them.

For instance, why a Ganesha image prescribed by iconography, to be in a certain stance, should appear in other stances than the prescribed form, cannot be understood without conceding individual talent. And the skill which has gone to the modelling, the casting, and the ultimate shaping of images, cannot be attributed to Vishwakarma, except in a metaphorical sense. It is likely that, within the framework of tradition, the artisan lived a secular life, in which he learnt technique from the father who passed it on to the son. And, most of the time, it was the daring craftsman who, presuming that he had inherited the known forms, created new shapes by giving the twist and turn, which his own genius inspired. And the cleverest innovator was thus given the title of *Guru*, and attracted more apprentices, who were not necessarily his sons but other people's sons.

The fantasy and the skill which gave a bird-shape to a vegetable cutter, the transformation of a fish into the proportions of a pitcher using the open mouth to pour water, the giving of an elaborate handle to the pumice stone and other marvellous inventions, which make the objects of every-day use into new art forms, are startling phenomena, right in the heart of the conventional societies. Many of these things made for village homes anticipate works of art of the modern constructivists, the futurists, and the abstractionists of the West, by a few centuries.

The difference is that while the modernist works of art are for contemplation by a few, the outstanding designs of the past were used in daily life of the many.

— MULK RAJ ANAND

3. *An ingeniously carved wooden door with ivory inlay in the uppermost lintel-frame. Talegaon, near Pune, Maharashtra, c. 19th century.*

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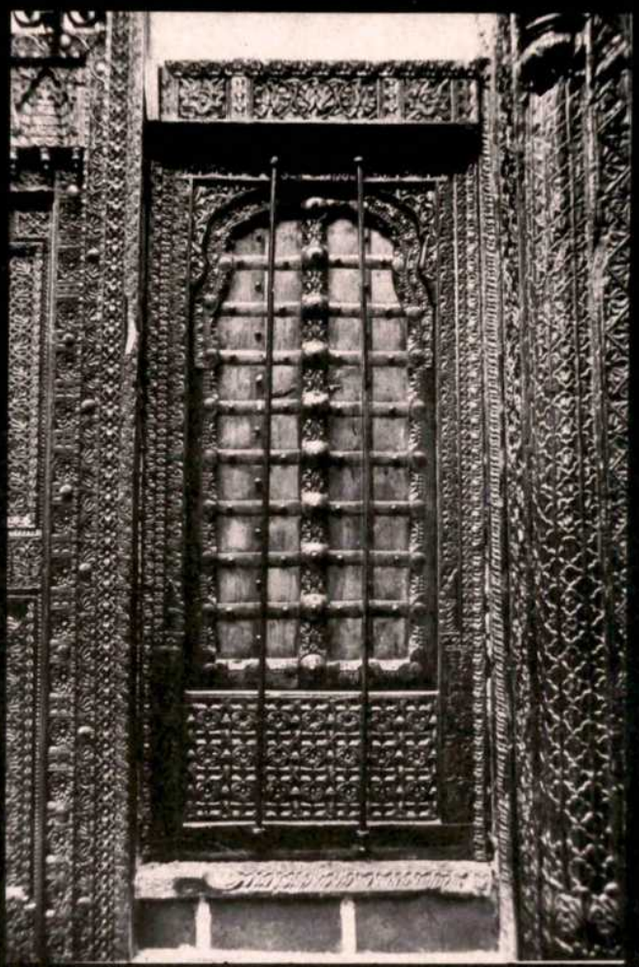

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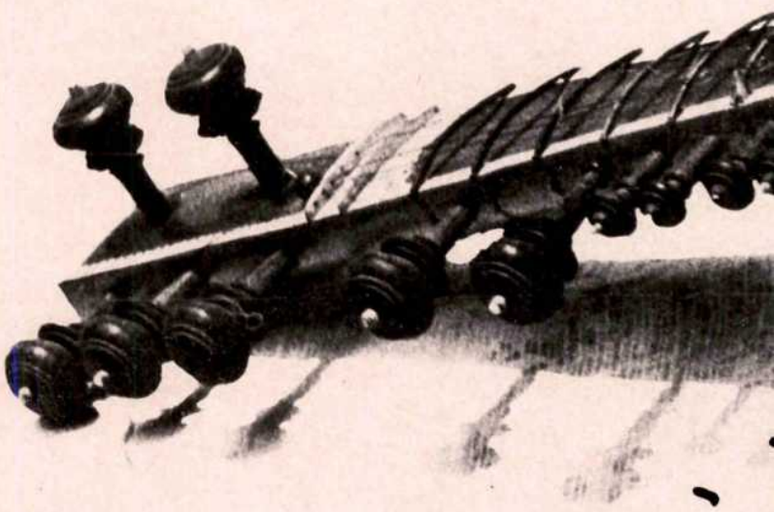
4. Resplendent interior of Diwan of Mastani Mahal.

5. Maharashtrian Madonna and child in wood. c. 19th century.

6. Exquisitely carved window of a Rajasthani house with ornate carving. c. 19th century.

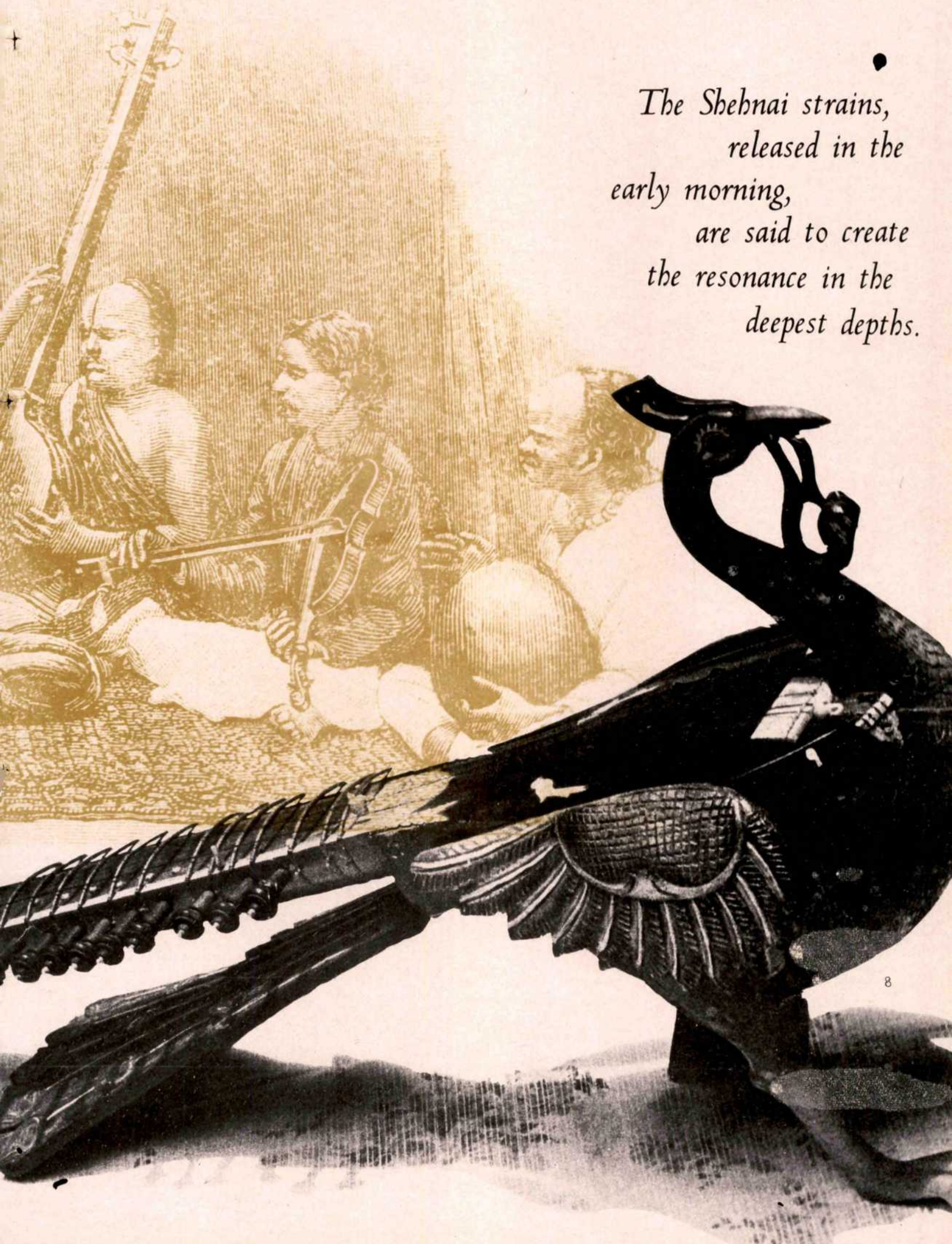
7



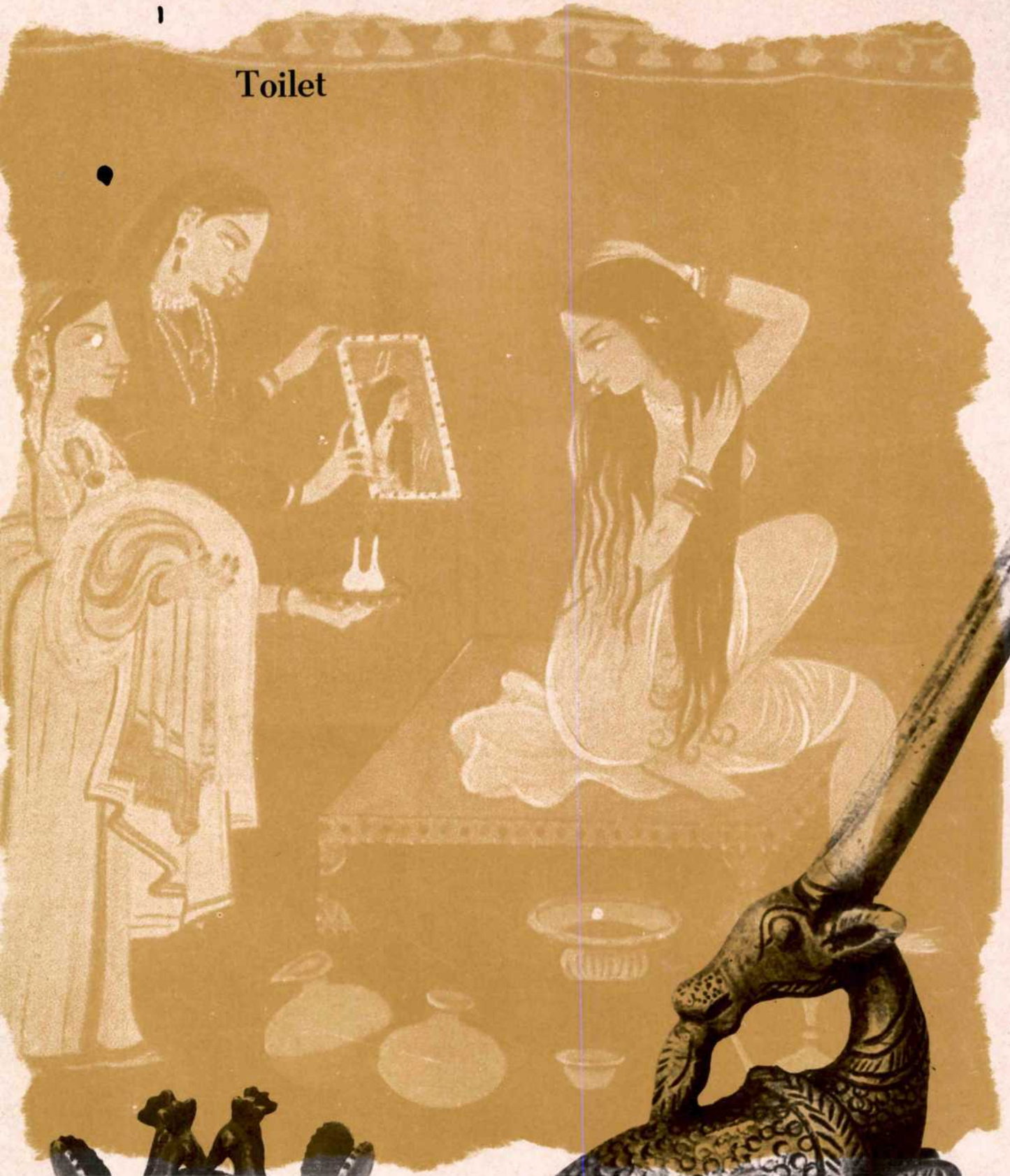
7. *Heightened moment of the music recital.*
(photo Lance Dane)
8. *A Sitar incarnates itself in the fantasy form of a peacock.*

Music

The Shehnai strains,
released in the
early morning,
are said to create
the resonance in the
deepest depths.



Toilet



9

10

11

9. *After the bath—a look in the mirror.*
10. Vajri, *a foot scrubber of brass with four peacocks picking grains in the centre. Maharashtra, c. early 20th century.*
11. *A deer-shaped hair-drying pin of brass. Kerala, c. 19th century.*

12

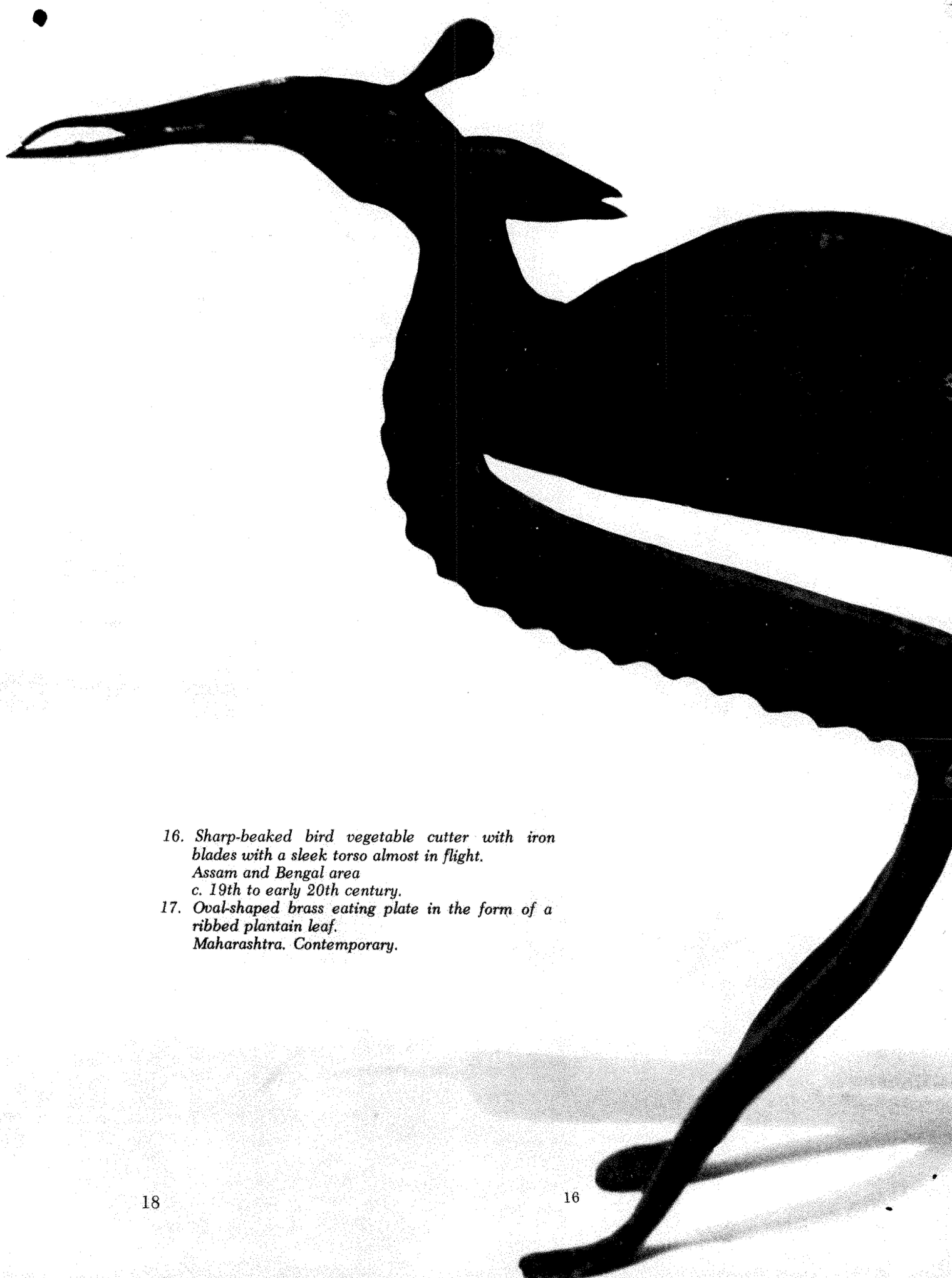
12. *A colourful* caitra-gauri pata, *a painted cloth panel in honour of goddess Gauri worshipped during the month of* Chaitra.
Maharashtra, c. 19th century.

Cooking

13. *An oil lamp with a fantasy form of Saraswati turned into a peacock.*

14. *Radha in the kitchen.*

15. *A vegetable cutter with wooden base and a peacock-shaped iron blade with twist and turn of the body symbolising energy.*



16. Sharp-beaked bird vegetable cutter with iron blades with a sleek torso almost in flight.
Assam and Bengal area
c. 19th to early 20th century.

17. Oval-shaped brass eating plate in the form of a ribbed plantain leaf.
Maharashtra. Contemporary.

18. *Box, for condiments, in the form of peacock with sliding lids*
Rajasthan, c. early 20th century.
19. *Carved wooden spoon hangers*
South India, c. early 20th century.
20. *Detail of a fantasy lid of a brass box with a shapely face of a woman, surrounded by ovoid female faces*
Bengal, c. 19th century.

19

K.P. 2061

23

◀ 21. *A highly decorative copper and brass pot with embossed inlay work.*
Benaras, c. 19th century.

22. *Woman writing a love letter.*

24

23. *Ink well of brass in the form of a wine cup with pagoda-like lid and silver chain*
Andhra Pradesh, late 19th century.

24. *A flattened globular melon-shaped ink well of brass with a peacock-cap tied with a chain and an attached long pen case.*
Gujarat c. 19th century.

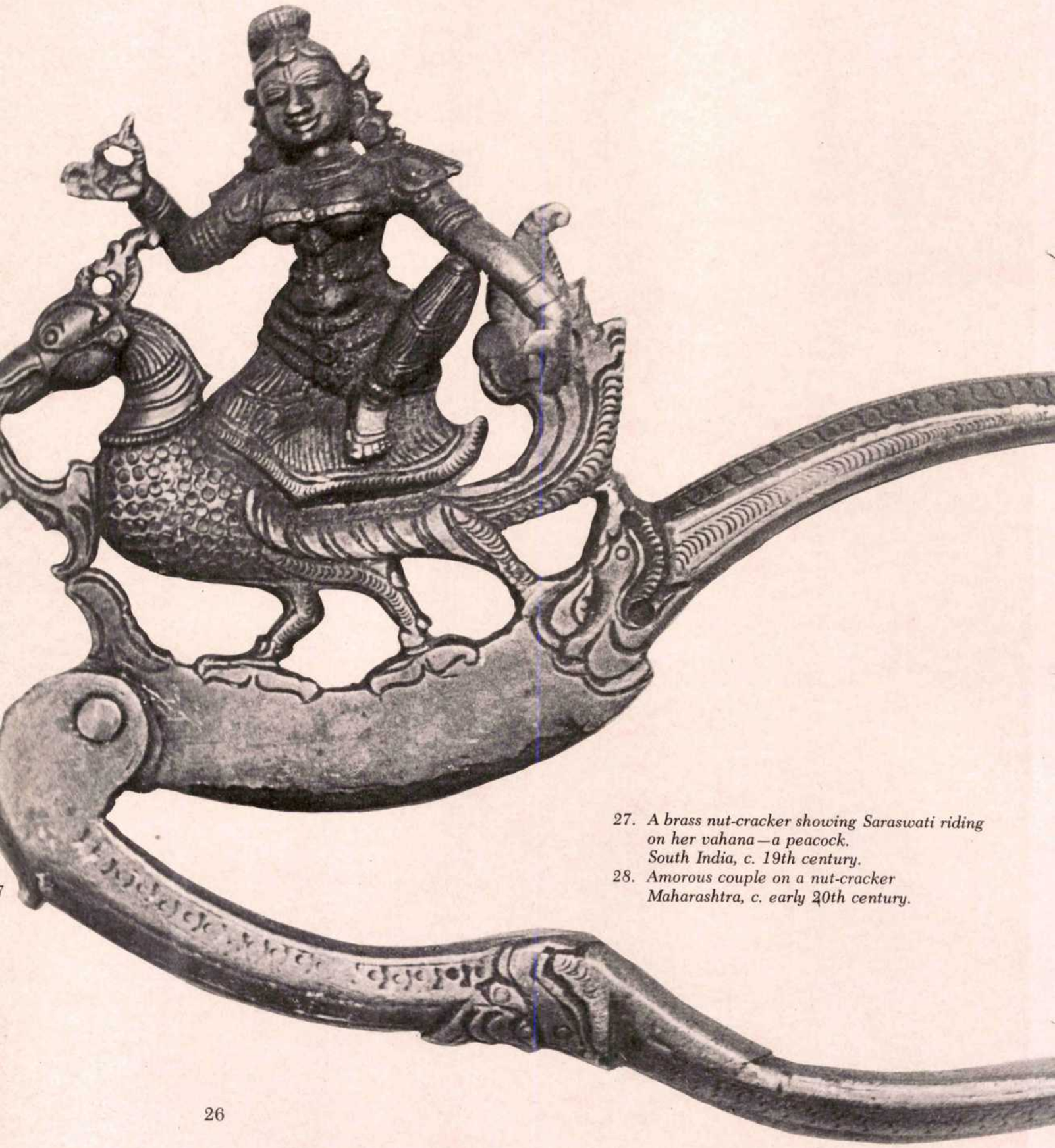
25

24

26

During the leisure hours
the deepening
was through
song, and dance and play.

25. *Offering of pan. Detail from a Maratha painting.*
26. *Beautifully designed betel box in the form of a fish with wheels underneath.*



27. *A brass nut-cracker showing Saraswati riding on her vahana—a peacock. South India, c. 19th century.*
28. *Amorous couple on a nut-cracker Maharashtra, c. early 20th century.*

29

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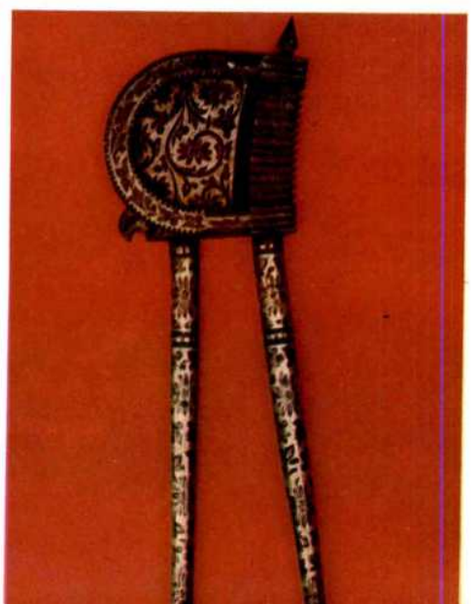
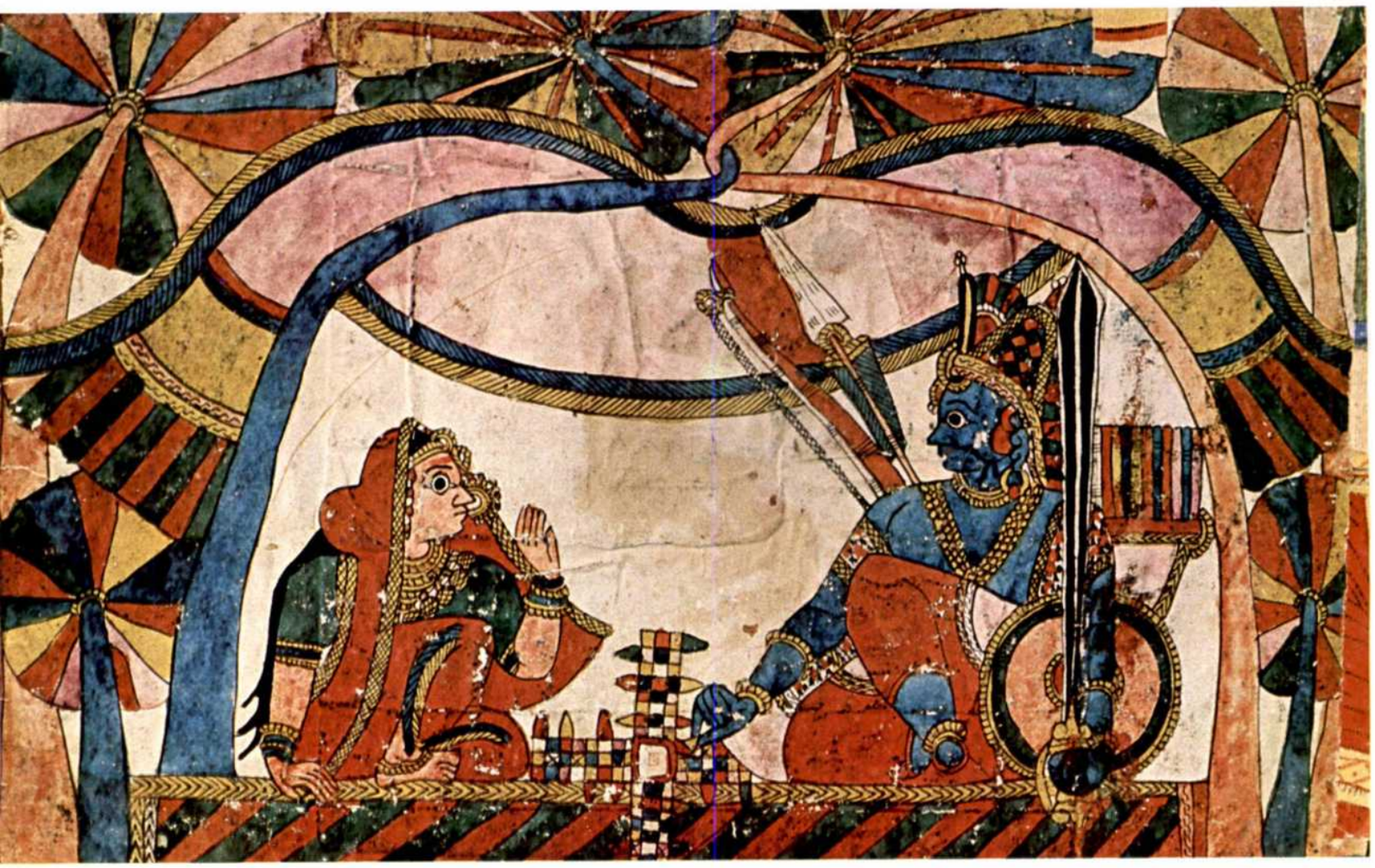


28

29. *Nut-cracker conceived as the mother facing a child.*
30. *Here man and woman are balanced in the poise of love.*
31. *Fantasy bird flying off in sharp flight like the sound of nut's cracking.*
32. *Man and woman riding a horse conceived as a flying spirit.*
33. *Nut-cracker with engraved floral design in bidri work—probably from Bidar.*

34

34. The Nayak and Nayika exchange pans to initiate love play. Maratha painting.



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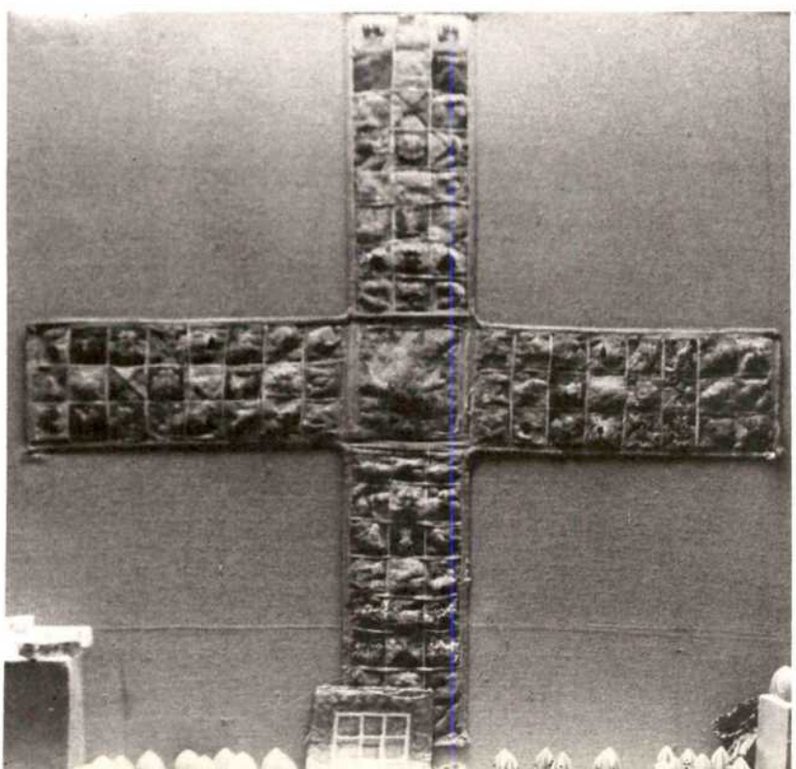


35. *Raja Rani playing chaupat.*
The Game of Chaupat.

36

36 *Detail of Ravana's heads with wild big eyes and raised sword in hand.*

37

37. *The heroic Baji Rao Peshwa.*
38. *The heroine of the romance of Baji Rao, the seductive Mastani Begum, daughter of the Maharaja of Rohil Khand by his Muslim concubine, who fell in love with the Peshwa at first sight.*

39

39. *Sadashiv Rao Bhau—nephew of the Peshwa, who commanded the large Maratha army.*

Ramavijaya (Victory of Rama)—
Chitrakathi Paintings from Maharashtra

40

40. Rama, Sita and Laxman cross the River Ganga for the exile for fourteen years in the South. The aquatic creatures accompany them to the southern bank of the river.

41. Journeying, they come to the hermitage of sage Agasti, who advises them to settle at Panchavati on the banks of River Godavari. Laxman builds a beautiful hut of wood and clay and hay. They pass their days happily in the hut.

42. Ravana, the demon king of Lanka hears of the enchanting beauty of Sita. A plot is hatched. Maricha, uncle of Ravana, assumes the form of a golden deer and comes dancing towards Panchavati. Sita, fascinated by its golden skin, implores Rama to kill it, so that she can make a choli *from its skin.*

Rama goes after the deer, which lures him far away. Rama kills the deer, from which emerges the demon Maricha and lies at the feet of Rama.

47

48. *Hanuman, the messenger of Rama, comes to Lanka in search of Sita. He cites her in Ashokavana and concealing himself in the foliage of a tree, drops Rama's ring in her hands.*

49. *Sita sees Hanuman and asks him to come down. Hanuman introduces himself as a messenger of Rama and gives her all the news about Rama and Laxman. He takes a walk in the garden with Sita, and assuring her of her rescue, takes her leave.*

50. *Rama invades Lanka and kills Ravana. Hanuman beating a drum, approaches Sita and breaks the gladdening news.*

51. *Sita, sitting in a gem-studded golden palanquin, is carried in a jubilant procession for her long-awaited meeting with Rama.*

44. *Sita urges Laxman to rush to Rama's help. Laxman senses the trick of the demon and assures Sita that Rama will kill the demon and return safely. Sita scolds Laxman and flings false charges at Laxman that he has an eye on her and he wishes his brother's death. Aggrieved, Laxman agrees to go but draws a semicircle before the hut and tells Sita not to cross it.*

45. *Immediately Ravana, in the garb of an ascetic approaches Sita and begs for alms. Feigning fear of the wild animals protecting her, he urges her to come out and give the alms. Sita forgets Laxman's warning and crosses the semicircle.*

46. *Ravana scoops the earth on which Sita is standing and making her seat in a wooden palanquin, flies away.*

47. *But on his way he is accosted by Jatayu, the brother of Garuda, and a family friend of Rama. Ravana kills Jatayu and brings Sita to Lanka. He keeps her in Ashokavana, guarded by ferocious demon women.*

43. *But before dying it gives a painful wail imitating the voice of Rama. "O Sita, O Laxman, save me".*

University has conferred on me the degree of D. Litt. (Honoris causa). I appreciate these honours, because I know that, in the end, devoted labours are recognised.

When I sit in a relaxed mood, one thought comes to my mind, that, in the last fifty or sixty years, I have gathered many things and made a large collection. The collection has grown slowly. And from my assemblage, a show-place has come to be. But whatever things I have, and by seeing which connoisseurs open their eyes wide, are all the work of those many craftsmen who have been neglected and forgotten. Having created these objects, they have merged with the Unknown. If they had not created these things, how could I have erected this wonder-house? But I know their souls are dwelling in these very objects of art.
And I bow to them with reverence.

This whole effort at reminiscence, this jumble of stray words has arisen like a poem from within me. I feel I have always been writing a long narrative poem to fill my life with the fragrances of the past.

Dinkar Gangadhar Kelkar

My Past is my Future

For the last sixty years, I had but one aim.
May the race that I was running all these years continue in the future too – that is my ardent wish. A full account of my life-long efforts at collection of folk arts will be available to the reader of this book.
For this, I am indebted to Dr. Mulk Raj Anand and his associates.

It is not my nature to look back and review the past. In the opinion of most people, it is good to have glimpses of the past, so that one does not repeat one's mistakes.
Perhaps there is a great truth in this. But my temperament does not allow this. I am running a race, which pulls me along by its very momentum.
And it is due to this trait in my nature that I was able to assemble this big jumble.

There have been many unhappy incidents and difficulties in my life.
But – inspite of the shortage of money and discouragements caused by "well-wishers," I did not stop my quest. I did not let difficulties stand in my way. Surmounting them every time, I have created the fantastic world of my Museum.

My personal life also has been complementary to the story of my Museum.
My wife Kamalabai always joined hands with me. Much credit for setting up the Museum goes to her. When the collection became larger,

my only daughter Prabha, alias Mrs. Rekha Ranade, gave me great support inspite of her own impecuniousness. She grew up with me and encouraged me with her youthful enthusiasm. My only son, Raja, passed away forty years ago. From that day on, I gave up everything except the search for art. I have given the name of my late son to the Museum. And his memory urged me on.

I have not narrated the story of the development of this Museum. Basically, I am a Poet. I do not remember much about my childhood. In my school life I did not make much progress in studies.
But I remember my teacher of those days. I was very much impressed by him. And I feel that much that I have attained in this life is due to this teacher.
One other thing I remember. I could never do mathematics. I liked literary and historical subjects.

When I was in the English fourth standard, I had a teacher, Shri Ram Ganesh Gadkari who was a renowned Marathi poet, play wright and humorist.
I had a great affection and respect for him.
In this very period, I started to compose poetry.
In three or four years I realised that I had a bent towards historical poetry. In those days most poets were busy with romantic themes. I was a lone traveller on my own way.
In my free time I used to read historical books.

During the vacations I tried to establish contacts with historical families at several places. All this made a great impact on me. One day, I began to feel that may be from these old family-houses I will obtain some traditional things of art, which I wanted to arrange in my room and thus create a kind of historical atmosphere. As this thought got hold of me, objets d'Art began to be assembled in my room and the beginnings of a Museum was made. This is the simple story of this Museum.

I have various types of smoking pipes and I am daily adding to these.

To enlarge the Museum I need money and land, but I am sure it will come.

I hope my work will make a contribution to the recognition of the beauties and wonders of our culture by showing the art of everyday life of our land.

In many respects this work is for educating the people. The realisation of the importance of the Museum for education will come much later. Outside India, Museums are almost holy shrines. There, the wealthy people constantly help by donating art objects.

By devoting a special issue of MARG to this Museum, Dr. Mulk Raj Anand has assigned me a high status. He has honoured my efforts and achievements. The scholarly study of the objects of my Museum and the writing of the monograph on them has been undertaken by my dear young friends, Dr. Jyotindra Jain and his learned wife, Ms. Jutta Jain. They are both ardent young scholars of their subjects. I am indebted to them for their contribution and feel happy and proud to see our children inherit the only legacy I can leave behind for them.

Shantanurao Kirloskar is publishing a beautiful colour Catalogue of the Museum, and I am very grateful to him for helping me in all my difficulties.

Everyone likes roses, but not the thorns. People like to have a garden of fruits and flowers, but few want to be gardeners who have to work hard. Keeping a single aim in life, I have been going ahead in life, and I have always avoided telling the story of my struggles. I am not interested in discussing the difficulties, miseries and insults that came my way. I have lit an everlasting incense stick. I want People to enjoy the perfume. That is my only wish.

Lately, the University of Bombay has honoured me by prescribing my poetry collection, "The poetry of the Unknown" for the B. A. syllabus. The Museum Association of India has elected me as their honorary fellow. And now the Pune

must have also played a role in this. After this auspicious beginning, I have received two lakhs more. Other well-wishers are offering money. And before long this Museum will become a living monument of my dreams.

I have received help from many friends from among whom I may mention Shri Rahul kumar Bajaj, Shri H. K. and A. N. Firodia, Shri Madhavrao Apte, Shri O.C. and A.C. Agashe, as well as Shri G.M and smt. Mangalabai Abhyankar, and Shri and Smt. Kantibhai Shroff. Smt. Abhyankar and Shri Shroff treat me as their family member. I want to finish the work of extending the Museum quickly. I cannot afford to waste a second. And I am sure the funds will come.

I have a desire to establish an unparalleled Museum pertaining to women of India, in which there should also be a Research Institute. In this, every article should concern women, and it should be created by women. I often feel that women do better work than men in India. The administration of this Museum should also be in the hands of women.

In this Museum, I want to evoke the ethos of every part of our country. I shall spare no pains to achieve this.

Also, I want to make two more galleries. All this is not idle dreaming. This is a plan to be initiated immediately. I have thought over this. The first gallery will be of Tribal art. Artefacts from various tribal communities will be assembled here. I have already begun to collect these. The Second gallery will be Folk Arts. In this I shall not be able to display everything from the whole of India, but I shall present atleast the most important things.

I love Terracottas. So there will be a gallery entirely devoted to Terracottas.

Another favourite of mine is the puppets. In various parts of India there are leather puppets. Some of these I have already collected. I am looking for more.

I have also collected embroideries and I am aspiring to collect more from the various parts of the country.

Indoor games is another theme, especially playing cards, various brain-teasing games, and dolls from Karwar and Konkan areas.

When I was occupied with my search for art objects I often received financial assistance, in difficult times, from friends, among whom the most prominent are my brother, Dr. Bhaskarrao and my mother. Since they are from my own family, they may not wish to have their names mentioned, but I cannot forget the help they gave me. And on this occasion I must not also forget to mention my friend from Bombay, Abdur Qadar Isaji, who gave me understanding of antiquities.

To my memory also comes the name of Dadasaheb and Smt. Sushilaben Maulankar, without whose moral and material help this Museum would not have come into existence.

I have already said that I do not like to look back. I do not want to stop the race that I am running. Now I have entered 83rd year of my life. In a way, I am aware of this, in a way I ignore the fact. Actually, I have forgotten my age already earlier. The most powerful One is helping me in all that I do.

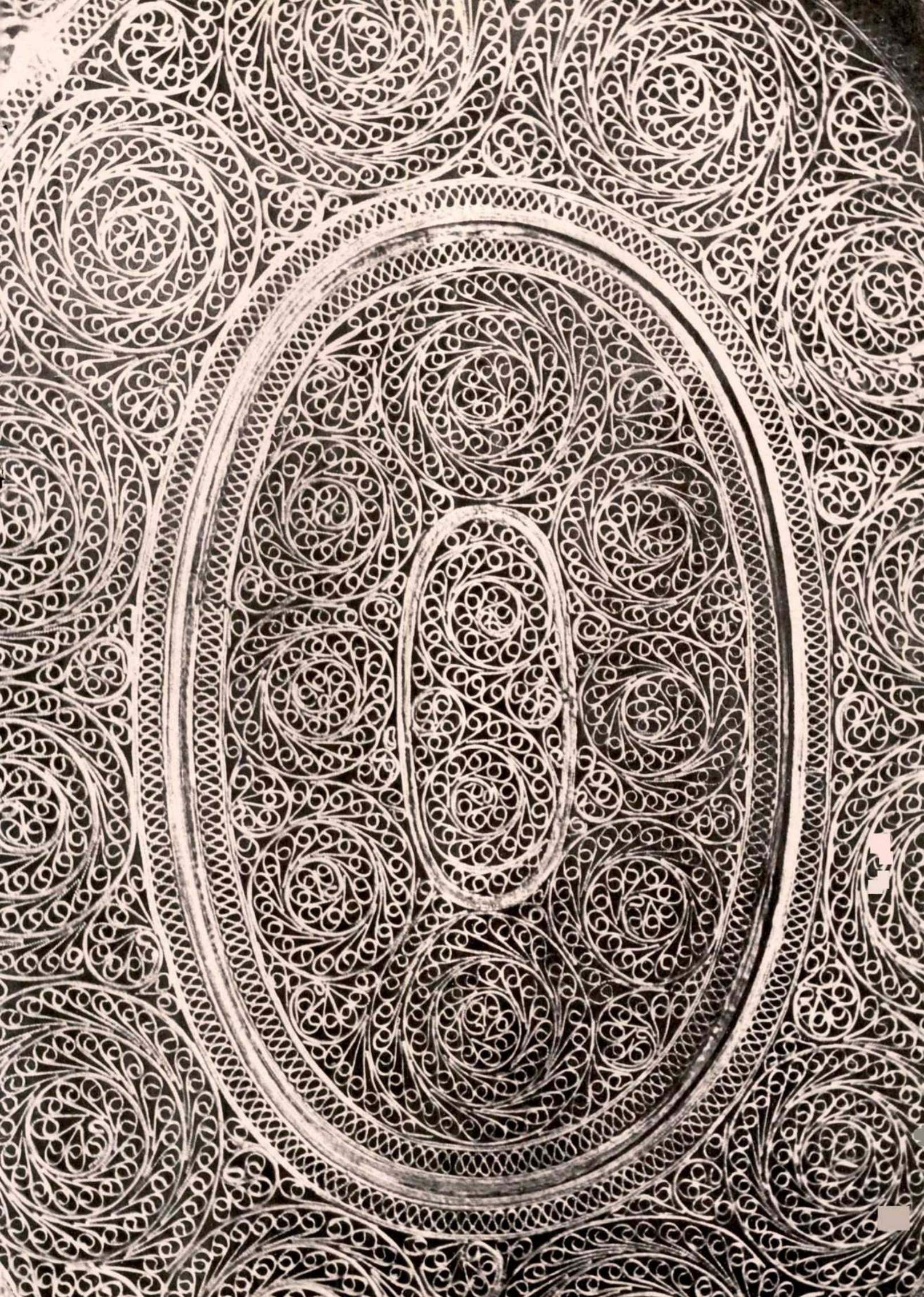
There is a big bundle of experiences on my back but I am putting the past behind. Now I hope that everything will go smoothly. Whatever money is required, will be available from generous friends. The Museum is no longer MY Museum. I have donated it to the Government of Maharashtra and it is the Government's responsibility. But while handing it over to the Government, I felt that it is essential to reorganise it. The display should be improved. And we have to collect more objects. If we will not assemble the art objects of our country, who will do it? Already we see to our shame that if one wants to study the art of our country, one has to go abroad because many artefacts have been smuggled out.

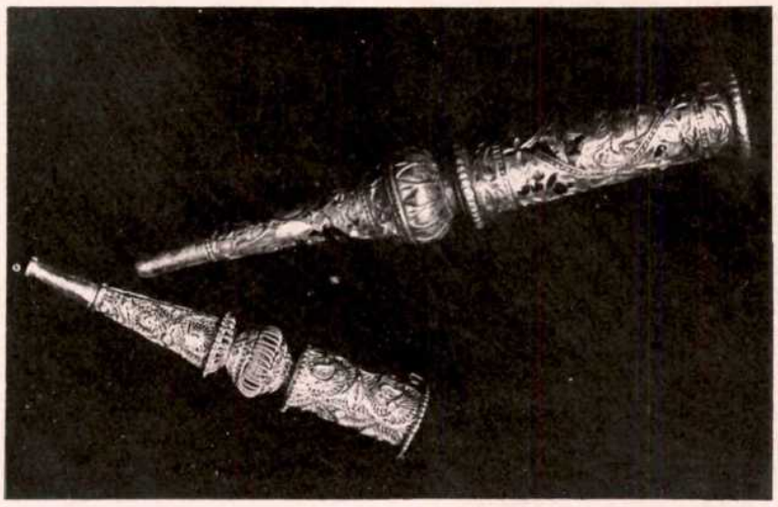
When I thought of reorganisation, I was not sure that the Government can solve this problem. To renovate this Museum I was in need of two and a half lakhs of rupees. One fine morning, I decided to go to Shri Shantanurao Kirloskar, the renowned industrialist of Pune. He treated me with respect. I requested him to donate fifty thousand rupees. And what a pleasant surprise !! On the afternoon of the same day I received a cheque for that amount. His wife, Smt. Yamutai

52. Montage relief of a Raja smoking hookah.

53. *Narasingha, used by the sadhus to invoke the gods with the sound which penetrates the heavens.*
54. *Kinnari: The three pumpkin forms make the base of kinnari with the bird flying off shrilly like the soul of the folk song.*
55. *Detail of a silver tray.*

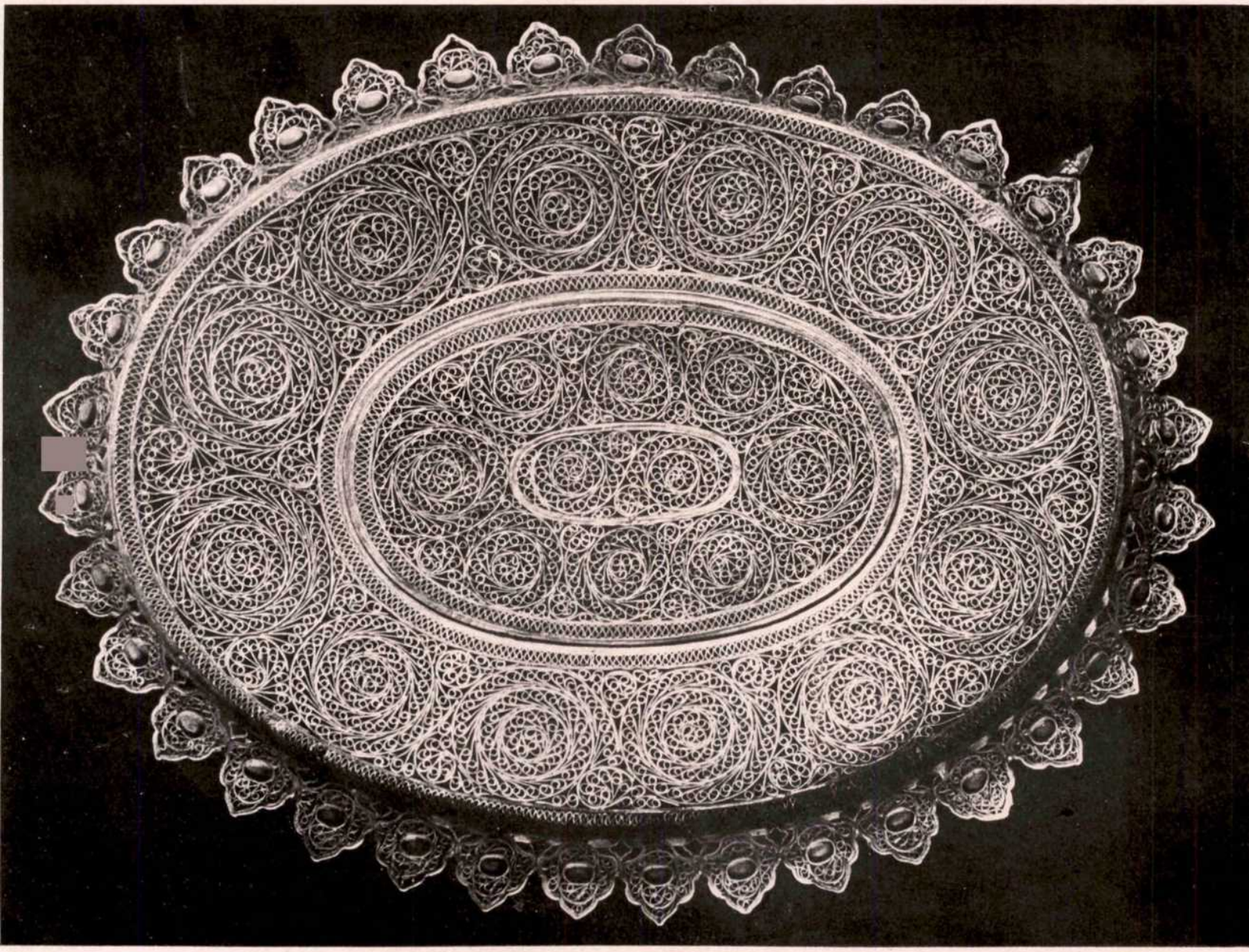
54





56

56. *Filigreed cigarette holders in silver.*
Hyderabad, early 20th century.
57. *A tray with more delicate filigree work in silver.*
Hyderabad, c. early 20th century.



58

59

60

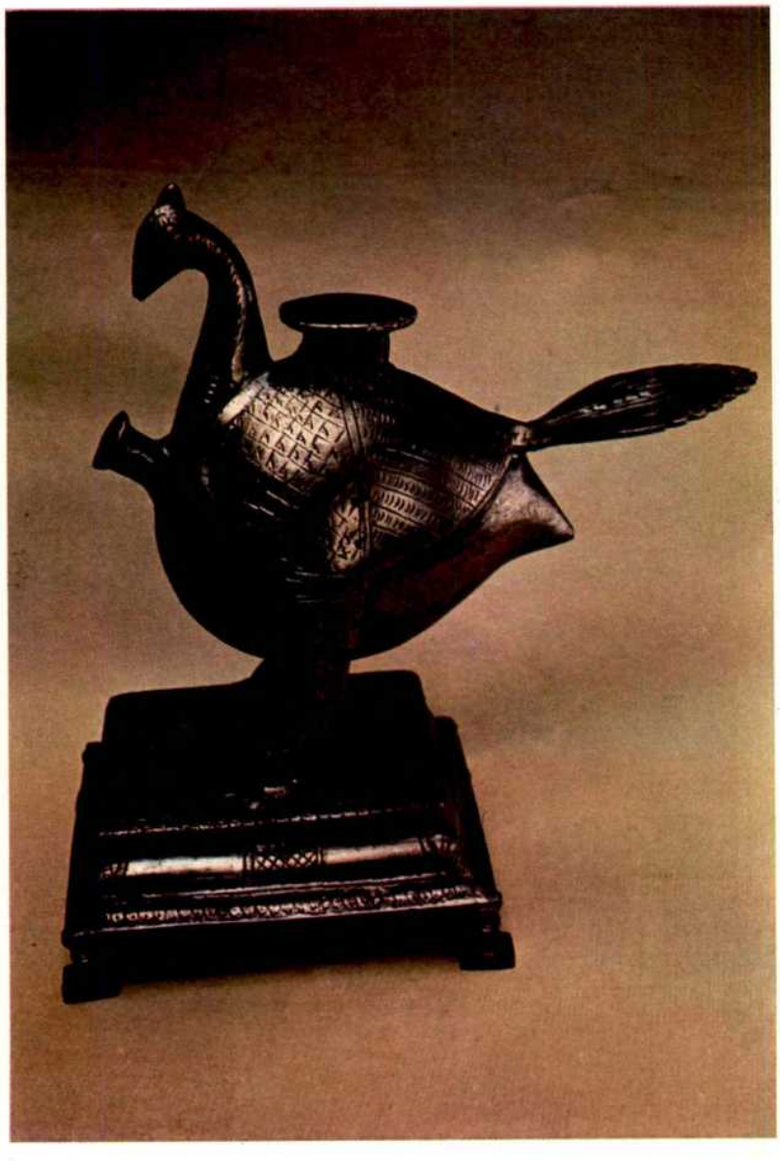
58./59. *Silver jars for sprinkling perfume and rose water Hyderabad, c. early 20th century.*

60. *Silver hookah.*

61. *A silver filigree container with leaf-shaped compartments which are locked with a flower knob in the middle. Hyderabad, c. early 20th century.*

62. *A decorative tree in silver with the peacock on top.*

63



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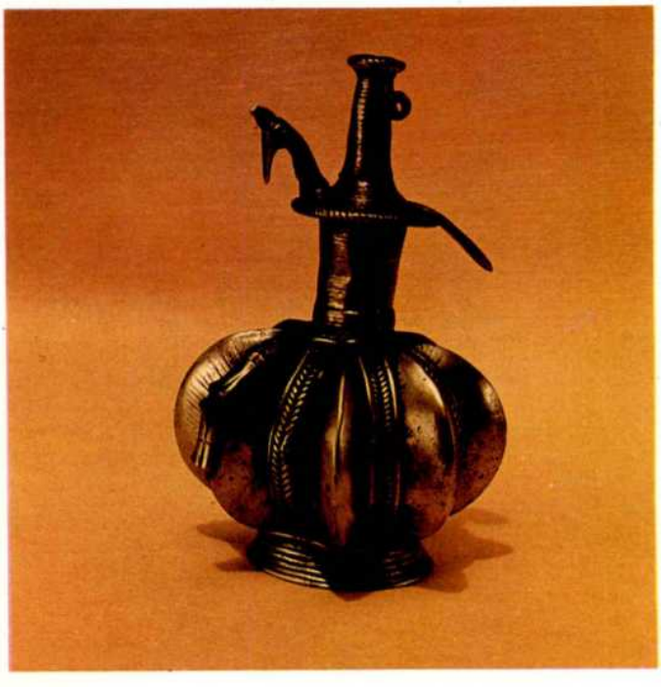
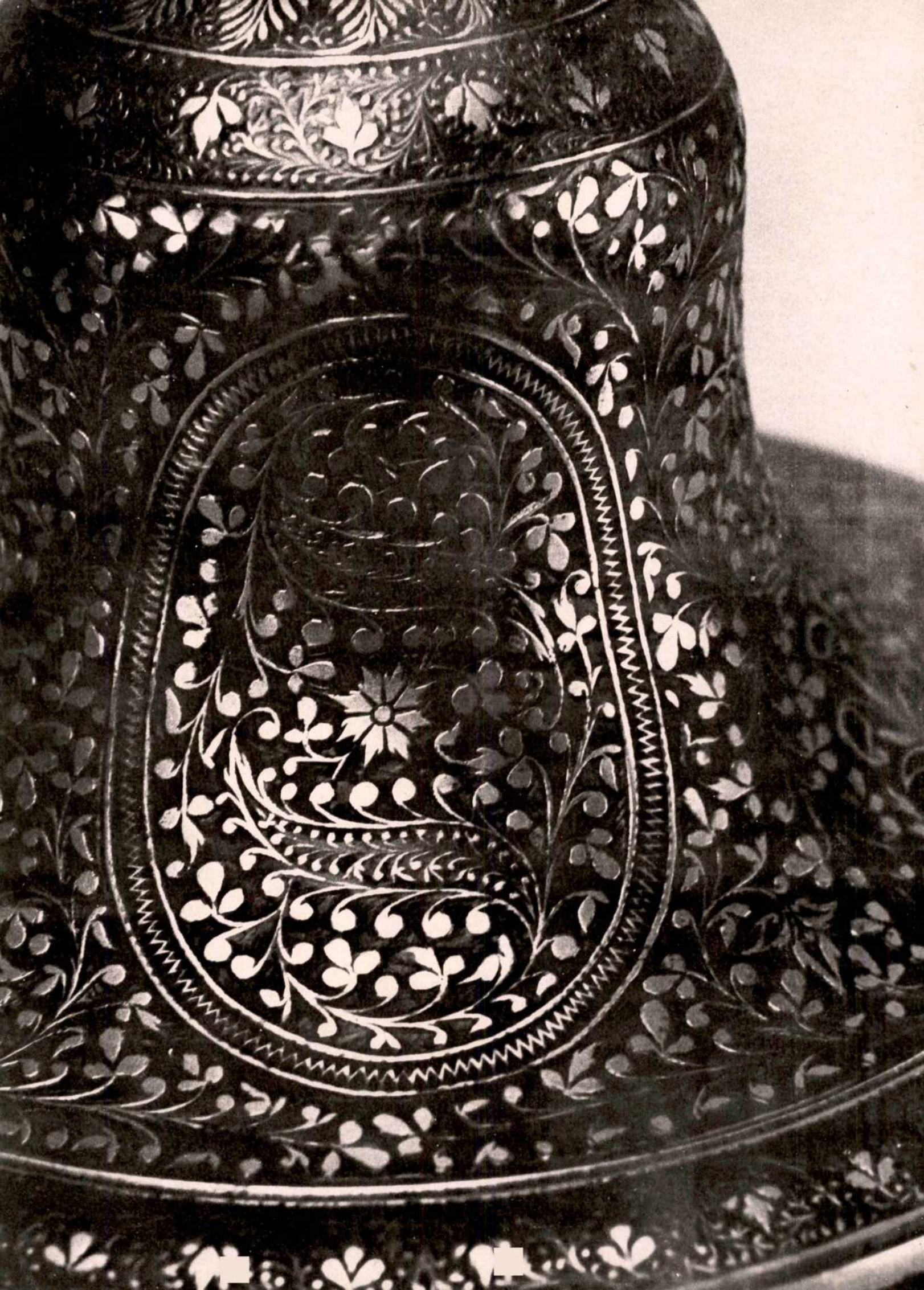


65

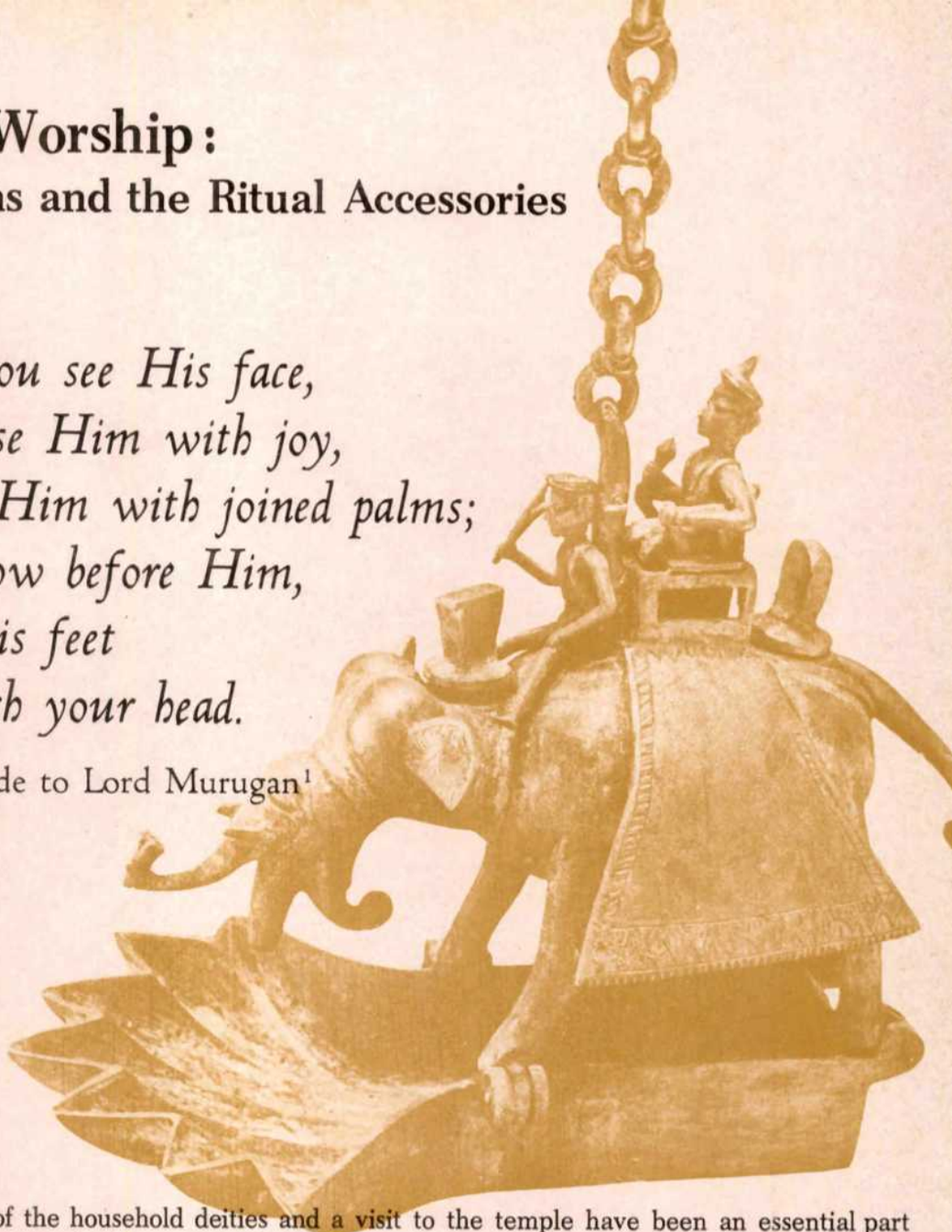
63. *Terracotta Chilams with four and five bowls for smoking different ingredients at one time.*
64. *Base of a hookah in form of a peacock.*
65. *Symbolic linear bird uplifts the static base of the hookah.*
66,67. *Bidri work engraved on the base of the hookah in a floral design. Hyderabad, c. early 29th century.*



Daily Worship:
The Icons and the Ritual Accessories

'When you see His face,
praise Him with joy,
worship Him with joined palms;
bow before Him,
so that his feet
touch your head.

Guide to Lord Murugan[1]



Daily worship of the household deities and a visit to the temple have been an essential part of the every-day life. In the system of *varnāśramadharma* all duties are held equally sacred. For a Hindu woman perhaps the involvement behind the act of cleaning the images, giving them a bath, annointing them with perfume, decorating them with flowers, etc. is not very different from taking care of her child or husband. If one thinks of the sixteen manners in which *Vaiṣṇavas* worship Kṛṣṇa, one finds that the ritual acts of waking him up, changing his clothes, offering him food and toys, swinging him in a cradle, etc. are only the ritual extensions of the secular activities of daily life of rural India. For this reason the rural iconography is interestingly coloured with local customs, beliefs and practices of every-day life. It is likely that the standardised Hindu iconography of the prescriptions of the *śāstra* also must have incorporated in the years of its infancy the elements of the indigenous cults.

Apart from the standard examples of the copper and brass images of a thirteenth century Siva Nandīśvara, a sixteenth century Lakṣmī and a Mahīṣāsuramardiṇī, a seventeenth century Naṭarāraja and a Veṇu Gopāla and an eighteenth century Gaṇeśa, in the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum there is a hoard of small images springing from the rural strata of the society which provides an interesting study of combination of local religious features and the standard iconography of *śilpaśāstric* prescriptions. These images include Gaṇeśa, Naṭarāja, Bhairava, Varāha, Garuḍa, Narasimha, Hanumān, etc.

Of all these icons Ganeśa is the most popular deity of Maharashtra. However, in the icons of the whole country his *vāhana*, the mouse, is placed almost insignificantly near his feet, whereas here in several Maharashtrian folk images Gaṇeśa is shown riding a mouse, in which the mouse tends to become much larger than Gaṇeśa himself.

A remarkable aspect of these folk images is the reflection of local costumes and headgears. In one image Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya, the two sons of Śiva, are shown seated on the lap of Śiva, in which the latter is shown wearing a conical Maratha cap or turban. One interesting image is that of dancing Gaṇeśa, in which the entire conception is exactly as in the iconography of Śiva Naṭarāja.

Several images of Bālakṛṣṇa also springing from Maharashtra show the child Kṛṣṇa wearing either a Peshwa turban or a European hat. A two-armed solid-cast seated Gaṇeśa from Nepal is shown wearing the *dhoti* with local Nepali broad ornate border.

Another remarkable group in the series is that of the images of a multi-armed standing goddess killing a demon who is half issuing from a cylindrical part or the body of a buffalo whose decapitated head lies on the pedestal. These images rather belong to and derive their inspiration from the local cults of the goddess killing a demon in which the standard Puranic story of Mahīṣāsuramardinī is not always in the centre. In most of the local *mahātmyās* the names of the goddesses and the demons and the entire theme are different from the standard Sanskritic version. May be these hundreds of local versions and their related icons have provided material to the evolution of the Hindu concept of Mahīṣāsuramardinī.

The casting of the images is marked by such characteristics as protruding eyes, simplified limb forms and details of features and ornamentation, extraneously applied as in terracotta.

Related with the worship of the deities are the various ritual accessories. It is obvious that if the man needs a simple spoon, the gods need an ornate one, if man bathes with a simple pot, god bathes with a precious one. The most important of the ritual accessories are the lamps, the containers for water, flowers, perfume, scented powder, sandal paste and saffron, ritual spoons and ladles, bells, etc. A beautiful range of such accessories of worship are displayed in this Museum.

Of these the *acamani* (sanskr.) or *sandhye ci pali* (Marathi), a ritual spoon of brass is often made with great ornamentation. The spoon consists of a circular bowl to which a long handle is attached. The bowl is usually a plain hemisphere, but occasionally an ornately petalled flower cup. The handle is often heavily ornamented. In some cases the handle incorporates the image of a four-armed Viṣṇu, Kāliyādamana Kṛṣṇa, Seṣaśayin Viṣṇu, Hanumān, and Nandi and snake, the two symbols of Śiva.

These spoons are used in household and temple rituals for symbolic purification with sacred water. For transferring ritual water from a bigger container to a smaller one, for sprinkling water, and for pouring *ghī* into the lamp or sacrificial fire the same spoons are used.

The pots used for various rituals are broadly of three types, namely, the cylindrical ones for storing ritual water for purification in daily worship, the broad-bellied and narrow-mouthed larger pots often having inlays of different metals or incisions of sacred scenes from mythology, for carrying holy water from sacred spots and those in the shape of a *kamaṇḍalu* or a conch having a pouring channel or a gargoyle often in the form of *gomukha*, a cow's head, for sacred bath. Of these pots the more remarkable ones are with a flouting belly which contain intricate incisions of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu, of the *līlās* of Kṛṣṇa and of hunting scenes, floral designs and animal decorations.

—JYOTINDRA JAIN

1. Pattupāttu, Tirumuruganarrupadai, 285-90. quoted A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India.* Fontana, 1971, p. 333

68. *In the craftsman's fantasy all gods are energised, and the shape of the icon has changed frequently. Here, the Ganesha acquires many more arms and emblems than prescribed in the Shilpashastras.*
South India, 18th or 19th century.

68

69

69. *Harmonies of line and form here simplify the Ganesha image by abstracting detail— a unique Ganesha figure wearing a* dhoti.
Nepal, date unknown.

70. *Ganesha dances in the craftsman's fantasy and almost assumes the form of Shiva.*
Benaras, c. 18th century.

71. *Krishna as Venugopala, dancing almost in the Shiva pose (Gujarat), and three bronze figures of Balakrishna (child Krishna) with Peshva turbans.*
Maharashtra, c. 19th century.

71

72

73

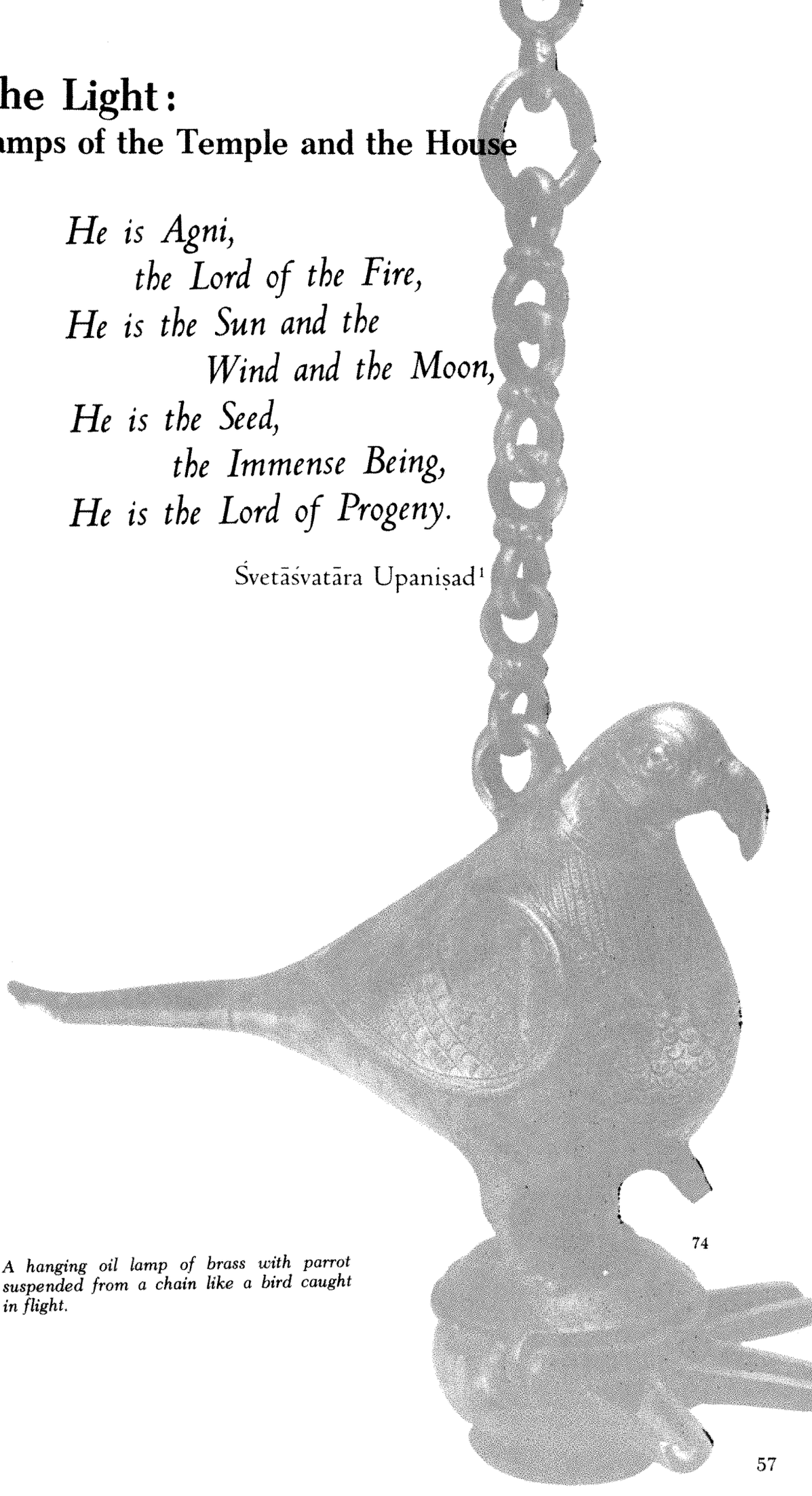
72. *The highly charged fantasy of the craftsman here transforms the* Varaha Avatar *of Vishnu into a lover carrying Prithvi in his arms under the shadow of the hood of Seshnag. Maharashtra, 18th or 19th century.*

73. *Even the spoon must become the god incarnate to be the vehicle of worship. The Supreme Vishnu here becomes the handle of a spoon.*
South India, c. early 20th century.

The Light:
Lamps of the Temple and the House

He is Agni,
the Lord of the Fire,
He is the Sun and the
Wind and the Moon,
He is the Seed,
the Immense Being,
He is the Lord of Progeny.

Śvetāśvatāra Upaniṣad[1]



74

74. A hanging oil lamp of brass with parrot suspended from a chain like a bird caught in flight.

Worship of fire must be as ancient as its discovery by mankind. The Vedic poets were still amazed by this great element and having conceived it as Agni, one of the highest deities, showered great eulogies in its praise. Agni in Vedic belief is not only a deity in its own right, but also a medium for carrying the sacrificial offerings to the gods, through the sacrificial fire. In Brahmanical and Hindu mythology, Agni is perceived as the fire in the hearths, as the power behind the thunderbolt (Indra), as the fire of the heavenly sphere (Sūrya), as all-pervading support of life (Vaiśvānara), as the eternal submarine fire (Vaḍvāgni) and as the fire of Immensity (Brahmāgni).

The lamp is a symbol of Sūrya and Agni and thus plays a very important role in the religious life of the Hindus. In a Brahmanic ritual handbook[2] the offering of the lamp is mentioned among the nine essential forms of worship. It is prescribed that one should kindle a lamp with a cotton wick or the one fed with clarified butter or sesamum oil at the side (of the image). It further states that the lamps of the best class are eight *angula* high; those of medium class three *angula*; those of the lower class as high as allowed by the available material.

It is not that the lamps were only used for ritual purposes. Before the advent of electricity the oil lamps were widely used all over India for sacred as well as secular purposes. An oil lamp was as much required to illuminate the palace of the king as a remote hut in a village. It was an essential object for all classes of society and therefore an inexhaustible variety of lamps ranging from a simple earthen bowl to the most elaborately fashioned structure incorporating hundreds of lamp bowls in its design came into existence.

The largest single collection of various types of lamps of India is the one in the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum. It represents ancient and modern lamps, religious and domestic lamps, metallic, wooden, stone and terracotta lamps, standing lamps, swinging lamps, rolling lamps, tree lamps, *toraṇa* lamps, lamps with perforations, lamps with icons, lamps with parrots and peacocks, lamps in all conceivable shapes, sizes and designs.

For the sake of simplification the collection can be classified into such categories as the *ārati* lamps, the standing lamps and the hanging lamps and a few miscellaneous ones.

Ārati Lamps

Ārati is an invocation of a deity done with the accompaniment of a lamp and music. In such a ceremony, the lamp is held in one or both the hands and waved repetitively in front of an image or any installation of a deity. Provision of a handle and an even base (to be able to place on the floor) are the two basic features of an *ārati* lamp. The *ārati* lamps are usually made of brass, but sometimes of other alloys or of copper or silver. An *ārati* lamp has sometimes one, but often multiple lamp bowls. The handle of such a lamp is sometimes in the shape of a simple curve, sometimes a creeper with flower and foliage, sometimes a cobra with multiple and expanded hoods, sometimes a peacock with elongated tail, sometimes embellished with a *nandi* or with the image of Khandoba, a Maharashtrian folk deity.

In some *ārati* lamps there is a single lamp bowl, but in most there are multiple cavities arranged in one straight line or in a semi-circle or in several tiers of rows of lamp bowls. The cavities are comparatively small, because the ritual of *ārati* lasts only a few minutes. In most *ārati* lamps the lamp bowls are attached to or are a part of a semi-circular tray, but occasionally these are attached to the figure of an elephant, a peacock, a cobra, etc. In some cases the lamp bowls are shown being carried by human or celestial figures.

Standing Lamps

An average standing lamp consists of the central staff divided into several rims and tiers having a broad base and a lamp plate or a lamp bowl on top. The staff usually consists of combinations of bell-shaped or inverted bell-shaped parts, tapering tiers, balls, rims etc. In some cases lamp bowls or circular lamp plates with extended multiple wick channels are fixed to the stem of the lamp. Occasionally the stem of the standing lamp consists of a peacock or a parrot. In some cases when the lamp bowls are attached only to the stem somewhere in the middle, the lamp is crowned by a peacock, a parrot or a flower bud. In most cases a standing lamp is surmounted by a circular plate having multiple wick channels and oil cavities.

The Nepali lamps in the collection are often in the shape of a miniature temple having lamp bowls in all four directions.

In most cases the lamp plates containing *ghī* or oil are open, but in some cases the lamp is covered by a perforated lid with a crowning peacock so that the moths might not fall into the liquid.

A standing lamp described as 'teacher-pupil'[8] lamp is rather noteworthy in which to the lamp stand two lamp bowls are attached extending in two opposite directions and affixed at two different levels of height. The lamp is supposed to be used at the time of imparting instructions in which the teacher sits on the side of the higher lamp and student on that of the lower one.

The ornamentation of the stem of the standing lamps has led to the development of another class of lamps called *vṛkṣadipa*, or the tree-lamps. In such lamps ornate branches are shown shooting out from the tiers of the stem at a regular distance. Each branch culminates into a flower-shaped lamp plate, each of which contains several wicks. When fully lit, such a lamp gives a rich festive touch to the entire atmosphere of a temple or a house with its hundreds of small lights.

Dīpikā or *dīpalakṣmī* type of lamps form still another class of the standing lamps. Here the central stem of the lamp is replaced by a standing woman holding in both her hands a large lamp bowl. The lamp is in the form of a celestial attendant of light. A woman is considered to be the incarnation of *Srī* or *Lakṣmī* and therefore the lamp in the form of a woman carrying light is, not surprisingly, designated in the popular terms as *dīpalakṣmī*, or *Lakṣmī* with a lamp. In some rare cases, the woman is shown standing over an elephant base. Occasionally the lamp is in the form of a dancing woman holding a lamp in one hand.

Dīpalakṣmī are more popular in Gujarat, Rajasthan, the Deccan and the South and are distinguishable from each other from the type of female costumes. Gujarat and Rajasthan *dīpalakṣmīs* wear a short blouse and a broad skirt, whereas those of the Deccan and the South are shown wearing a *sārī* or a skirt, rather tight-fitting to the lower body and often pulled between the legs as is the custom in these areas.

In the context of *dīpalakṣmī* lamps a mention must be made of the exclusively South Indian *gajalakṣmī* lamps in which a part of the periphery of the lamp bowl rises to become an arch enshrining the seated figure of Lakṣmī being annointed by elephants

Hanging Lamps

And entire class of lamps to be suspended from the ceiling seems to have been very popular from early times. Such lamps are in the form of an ornate lamp bowl at the bottom and a chain above. The lamp bowl itself is sometimes an ornate cup embellished with an arch decorated with flowers and birds (Nepal), or in the form of a square or circular wick plate (or bowl) surmounted by a huge metal *cakra*, a wheel, with flames issuing from the rim (South India), or just a hollow figure of a bird with a wick channel either issuing from the head (Orissa, Madhya Pradesh), or from a cup placed underneath the bird. Often the hollow bird is used as the oil bottle which releases oil into the lamp bowl which is placed just underneath the bird (Gujarat, Rajasthan).

In some cases of more eleborate hanging lamps the massive lamp chain is intercepted at every short distance by a lamp in the shape of a bird or a *dīpalakṣmī*.

The above types of lamps with prominent human and animal figures are prohibited in Islam. The Islamic mosque lamps are usually constructed from perforated sheets of brass. These are very much reminiscent of Islamic architecture involving perforated arches, screen walls and pointed domes. Such lamps are rather large and hollow. Inside this large vessel of the lamp, a lamp bowl with the burning wick is placed. When lit, the light filters through the decorative perforations and imparts a magnificent look, not only to the lamp, but also to the walls, the ceiling and the floor which are dotted by the shade and light created by the perforations. These lamps are suspended from the ceilings with multiple delicate chains.

Miscellaneous lamps

Some lamps are devised specially for a certain sectarian group or a worshipper in which case the image of a certain deity such as Ganeśa, Hanumān, Śiva, Viṣṇu are incorporated in any of the parts of the lamp. Sometimes mobile lamps are created by attaching wheels at the base of the lamp-construction. There are some examples of ball-shaped rolling lamps with perforations using a gyroscopic contrivance which keeps the burning wick inside the lamp always in an upright position.

Wooden lamps with adjustable angle or height are particularly common in Gujarat. Bracket lamps with the figures of peacocks, parrots, or lions or dolls, have a rotating device in which the angle of the lamp can be changed upto 180 degrees.

Similarly lamps with changeable height are devised in which the length of the lamp stem is adjusted by pulling upwards a stick construction holding a wooden lamp plate or lamp bowls.

In this collection there is a beautiful *garbi* lamp. *Garbi* is another type of wooden lamp of Gujarat which deserves a mention here. It is in the form of a small shrine or a tree holding lamp bowls on all sides and is placed in the centre of a group dance performed in honour of the goddess.

In South India there exist large arched gateways of metal surmounted by a *kīrtimukha*, the "face of glory", shaped as a lion's face, and embellished all over by small lamp bowls.

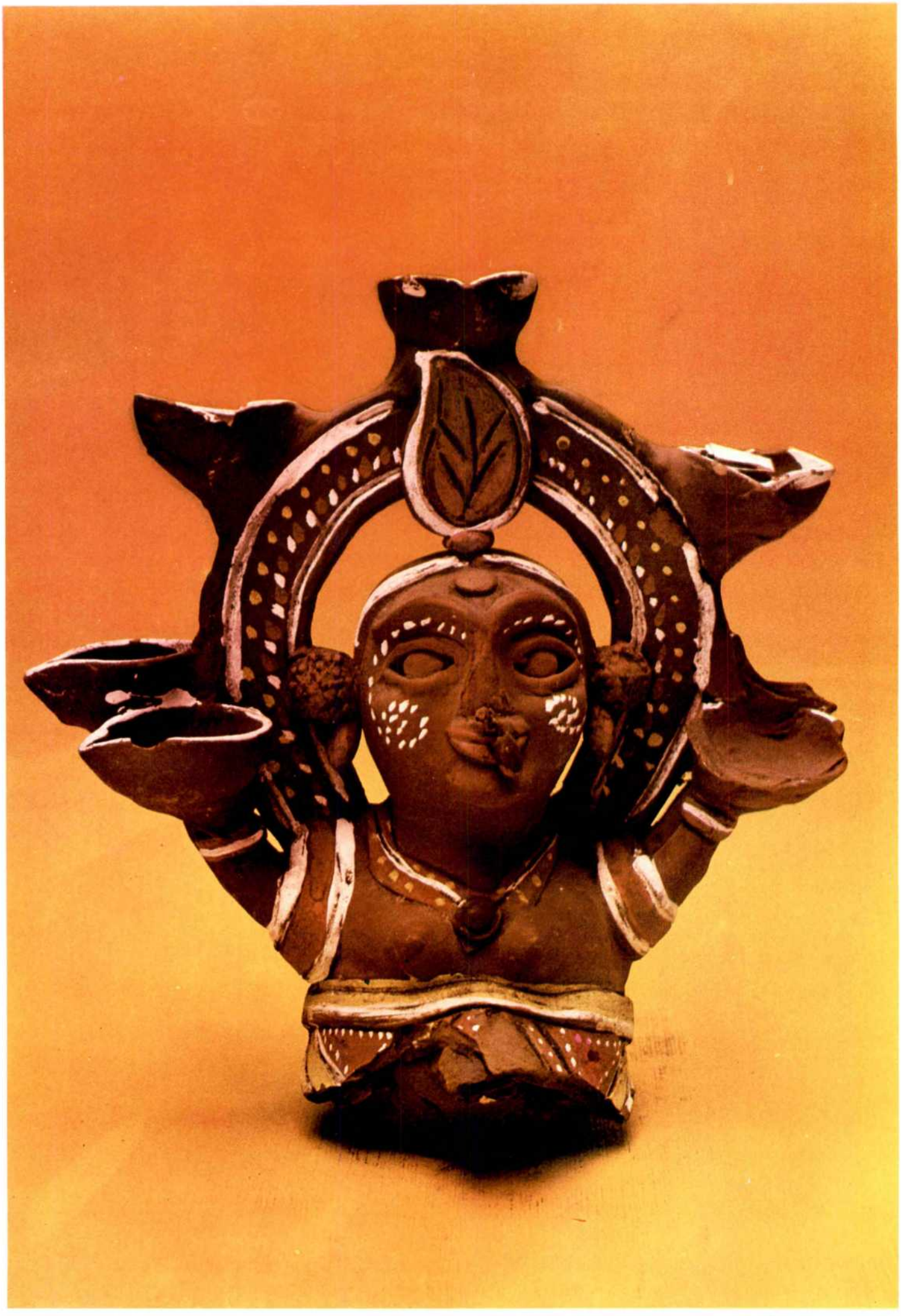
—JYOTINDRA JAIN

NOTES:

1. Śvetāśvatāra Upanisad IV, 1.2, quoted A. Danielou, *Hindu Polytheism*, London, 1964, front page
2. Kaśyapa's Book of Wisdom, op. cit. p. 213
3. D. G. Kelkar, *Lamps of India*, Delhi, 1961.

75. *Surya lamp of brass enshrines the vitality of the Sun-God in this intricately carved image. The image of Surya, the Sun-God is flanked by his two consorts riding a chariot with a row of seven horses and of twelve horses below. In the lower row, each horse carries a lamp over its head. Nepal, 18th century.*

76. *Highly ingenious image of Ganesha cast with a halo of flower frames. The rat* vahana *below and the lions on the sides on a leaf-shaped pedestal hold the oil to burn the wick with.*
Nepal, c. 19th century.
77. *The rat* vahana *of Ganesha is honoured in its own right in this symbolic lamp with many hollow oil wick flame containers.*
Maharashtra, c. early 20th century.



79-82. *Variations of fantasy in the making of decorative lamps show imagination and skill.*

79

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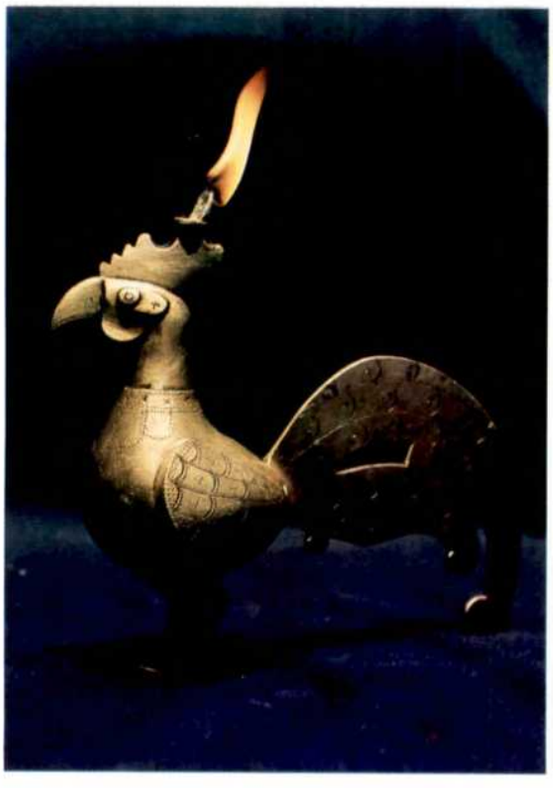
◀78. *Terracotta lamp with Durga face and torso enshrined in a halo from which spring lamp bowls. Bengal, c. mid 20th century.*



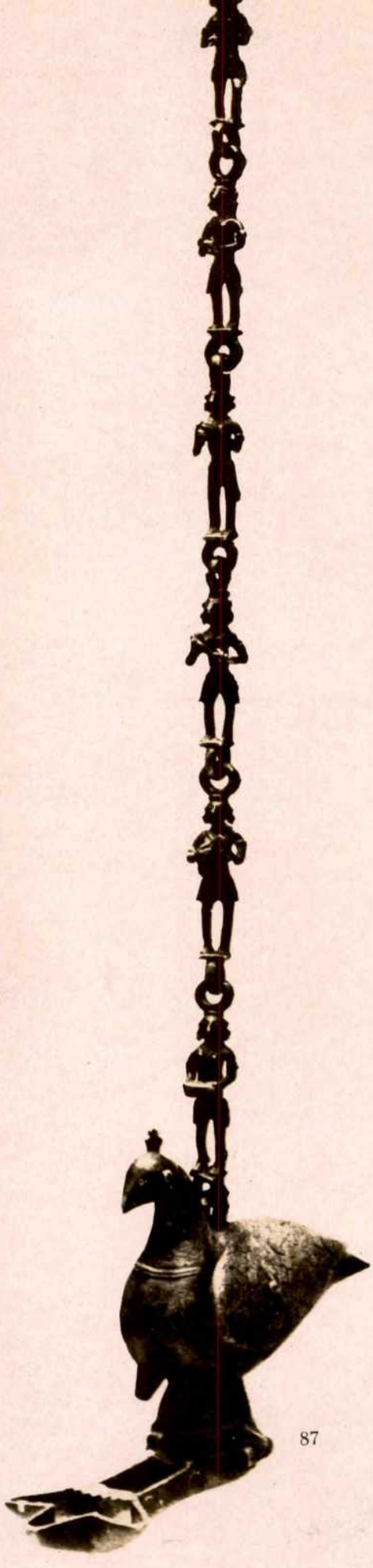
81

82

83. *This heavy peacock suspended from a thick chain comes from one of the great temples of South India.*
c. 19th century.
The smaller hanging lamps with bird shapes for bases were used in the inner sanctum by the side of the images of the gods.

88. *A brass lamp for teacher and pupil with higher and lower lamp bowls attached to the central stand.*
South India, c. 18th century.
89. *The Tree of life motif is adapted in this lamp bowl resting over a horse and crowned by a peacock.*
Deccan/South India, c. 19th century.
90. Dipika, *a brass lamp in the form of a woman holding a lamp cup in her left hand.*
Gujarat, c. 19th century.
91. *Maruti brass lamp: two-armed Maruti (Hanuman) holding a lamp.*
Maharashtra, c. 19th century.

86



87

84. *A hanging oil lamp of brass with peacock motif and a chain.*
South India, 18th or 19th century.
85. *A hanging brass lamp with parrot motif and a chain.*
Gujarat, c. 19th century.
86. *A hanging oil lamp of brass with parrot motif and a chain.*
Gujarat, c. 19th century.
87. *A hanging brass lamp with a pea-hen motif and with musicians on the chain.*
Rajasthan, c. early 20th century.

84

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91

Wood Carving

'Brahman was the wood,
Brahman the tree
from which
they shaped
heaven and earth.'

Taitirīya Brāhmaṇa[1]

The section of carved wooden entrance doors, inner doors and windows of the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum offers some of the finest examples of wood working as applied to these architectural features. Out of some twenty doors on display, six come from Gujarat, five from Rajasthan, three from Maharashtra, one from Orissa and the rest from the Southern India.

Before the art of stone carving and stone construction became popular in India in the early pre-Christian centuries, most of the craftsmen had been working in wood and ivory. Early exercises in stone as seen in the flat reliefs at Udayagiri and Khandagiri in Orissa or at Barhut and Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh, indicate that the artisans were struggling with the new material. The Sanchi inscription testifies that some reliefs were carved there by the guilds of ivory workers of Vidishā. Tradition of wood carvers in India is much older than that of stone carvers.

Even if once upon a time the occupations of carpenters in general, and specialisation in a certain branch of carpentry were confined to certain traditional communities, this division does not hold good anymore. Persons coming from different vocations practised the art of wood carving. In many parts of India the blacksmiths, the potters, the stone workers, the painters and even the farmers seem to have adopted carpentry or *vice versa*.

A traditional carpenter inherits his work tools from his father. In addition to these he buys new ones in the market or gets them made at the workshops of a blacksmith. A hand-saw having various sizes of teeth is used for dividing the blocks of wood, a wooden planer containing an iron blade is rubbed to and fro for levelling and smoothening the surface.

◀ 92. *An invocational lamp of brass with primitivist* nagini. *South India, c. early 20th century.*

In addition to these tools, chisels having circular, semi-circular, V-shaped or straight edges, gauges of various thicknesses, files of variety of grains, drills, adzes, hammers, etc. are used.

For finer carving of ornate nature a series of chisels is needed.

Stencils with the required designs are cut on cardboard and are later transferred on the wooden block for incision.

Castor oil and linseed oil are usually applied to wooden furniture for polish and durability.

Carving out all the required compartments, cavities and other components, from one piece of wood, rather than adding joints was considered skilful and therefore many earlier boxes, turban-hangers, opium mortars etc. were carved from one block of wood.

Teak, *tectona grandis*, and sisam, *dalbergia sisoo*, are the most valued of the wood types. Due to its strength, teak is preferred for construction work and due to its solidity for ornate carving. In fact teak and sisam are good for any construction, carving or lathe turning. Traditional objects made from teak and sisam range from a simple wooden chest to a huge ship. Sisam is preferred for chests and furnitures, *adina cordifolia* for making pillars and brackets. *Acadirachta indica, manilcana hexandra, maduca indica,* and *magniferra indica* are also commonly used for household wood-work. For lathe-turned objects any common tree such as *acacia arabica* or *erithrina suberosa* etc. are used which are popularly grouped under the class *'jungli'* or wild trees.

Gujarat and Rajasthan

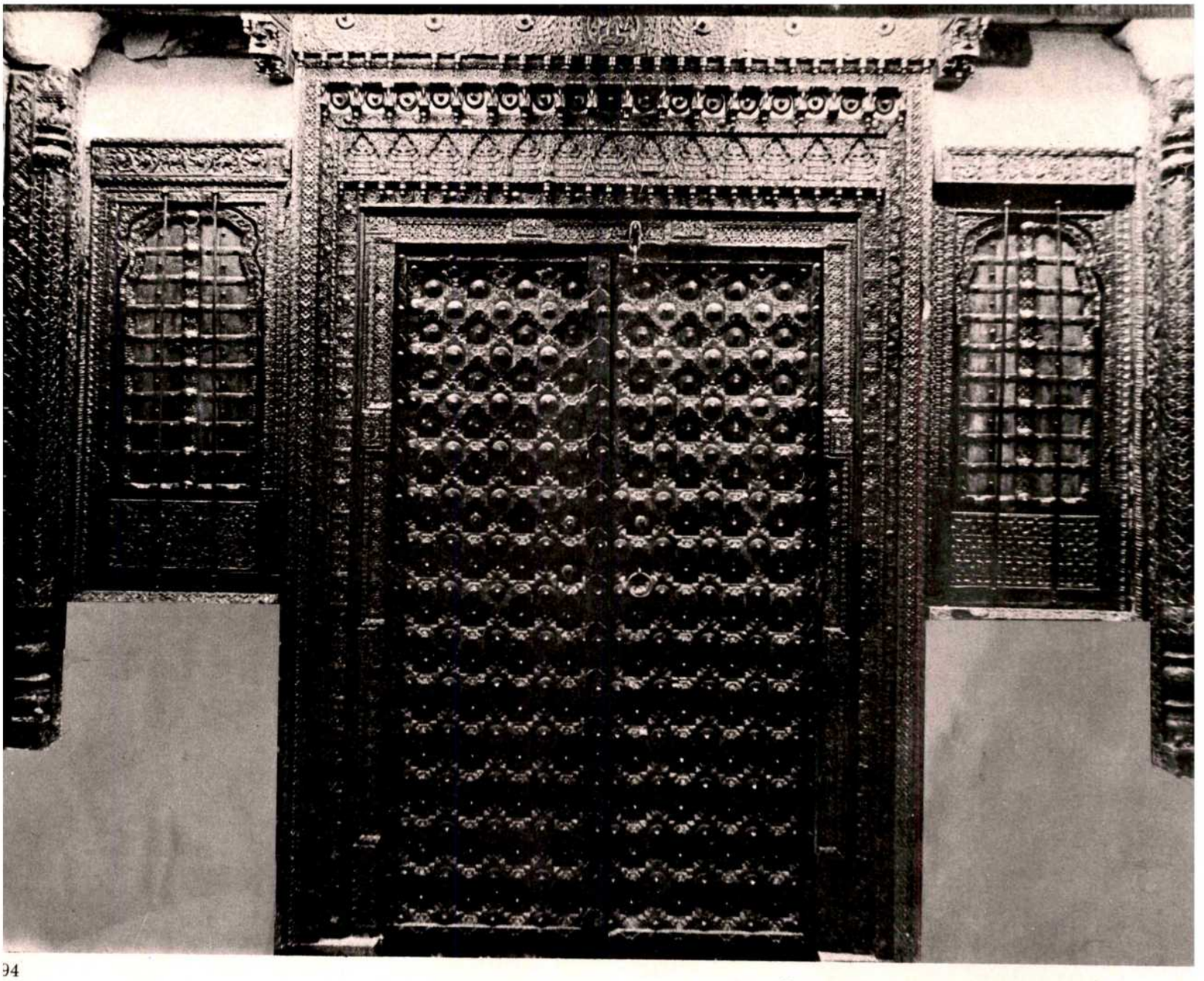
Gujarat and Rajasthan are particularly rich in wood carving as can be seen from the surviving monuments and objects. Perhaps the finest and most elaborate examples of wood carving come from Patan in North Gujarat which represents a faction of the same common great tradition which extends up to Bikaner, Jodhpur, Barmer and Jaisalmer. With various combinations of carved pillars, capitals, brackets, arches, domes and panels of pierced lattice work impressive niches, balconies, entrance gates and verandahs of temples and residential houses in Rajasthan and Gujarat were constructed of which perhaps the best examples are the temples of Patan, especially Vaḍi Pārasnāth temple of the Jaina community (now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York).

In addition to architectural parts the custom of using carved wooden chests called *majus* was very popular all over Gujarat and Rajasthan. The façades of these oblong chests normally made from sisam were intricately carved. Often parrots, peacocks, or human figures were attached to it as brackets. Another sturdier chest having wheels at the bottom called *patāro* was more common in Gujarat. The latter was usually encased in ornately embossed metal plaques. Other wooden objects of every-day life such as spice boxes, turban hangers, cradles, beds, swings, pitcher stands, lamps, opium boxes, opium grinders, hukkah parts, etc. were either carved or lathe-turned. The carved variety usually had shallow relief work of ornate motifs of flower and birds, whereas the lathe-turned objects were usually painted or adorned with lac. Some fine examples of these can be found in the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum.

Like any other traditional wooden door the doors of Gujarat and Rajasthan (also as represented in the Museum) have two heavy door flaps which, when closed, slightly overlap. The door frame consists of two vertical pillar-like parts with pillar base (or stone or wood) which flank the door on each side and are topped by a horizontal lintel. The door flaps are attached to the frame usually with a pivot, but sometimes with hinges. Parallel to the lintel at the bottom usually there is a horizontal threshold. The door lintel is often heavily ornamented with intricate carving of floral and faunal motifs. In some cases the lintel tends to adopt the shape of an arch. In the centre of the lintel of the entrance door usually there is a small niche in which an auspicious symbol is carved which in most cases is either a Gaṇeśa or a full vase (*pūrṇa ghaṭa*). In the case of some Jaina temple doors the lintel is filled with the motifs of eight auspicious marks or fourteen auspicious dreams. Each flap of the door usually is divided into several squares or rectangular sections with the help of vertical and horizontal carved belts. Mostly these sections

93. *Balakrishna, being the ideal child is here incarnated in the wooden scooter pushed by babies to learn to walk.*

93



94

94. *The most intricate door carvings are from Rajasthan or Gujarat, where the householder's eyes have to rest on decorative detail in the house after passing the day in the broad glare of arid landscape.*

are embellished with a wooden doll. The flaps of a door from Rajasthan in the same Museum are divided into several small sections each being adorned with ornate iron knobs.

Another delicate door from Rajasthan is painted in a Rajasthani style showing *rāsalilā*, the circle dance of Kṛṣṇa and *gopis* on the door flaps and figures of musicians on the door frame. One of the most beautiful examples of a Rajasthan door in the Musuem is that of a wooden one from Jaisalmer, heavily inlaid with ivory. The door has a fivefold receding door frame with Gaṇeśa in the uppermost lintel and peacock pendants in the fourth one. The door flaps are almost completely encased in ivory mosaic.

The carved windows of Gujarat and Rajasthan are either with flaps or with fixed screens having floral surface ornamentation or perforated tracery of wood.

Often two small bracket figures of parrot, peacocks, horse heads or dolls are fixed as lintel projections.

Two Gujarat screen windows are fixed in the outer wall of the Museum building; these have rich lattice work consisting of regular lines of carved flower balls.

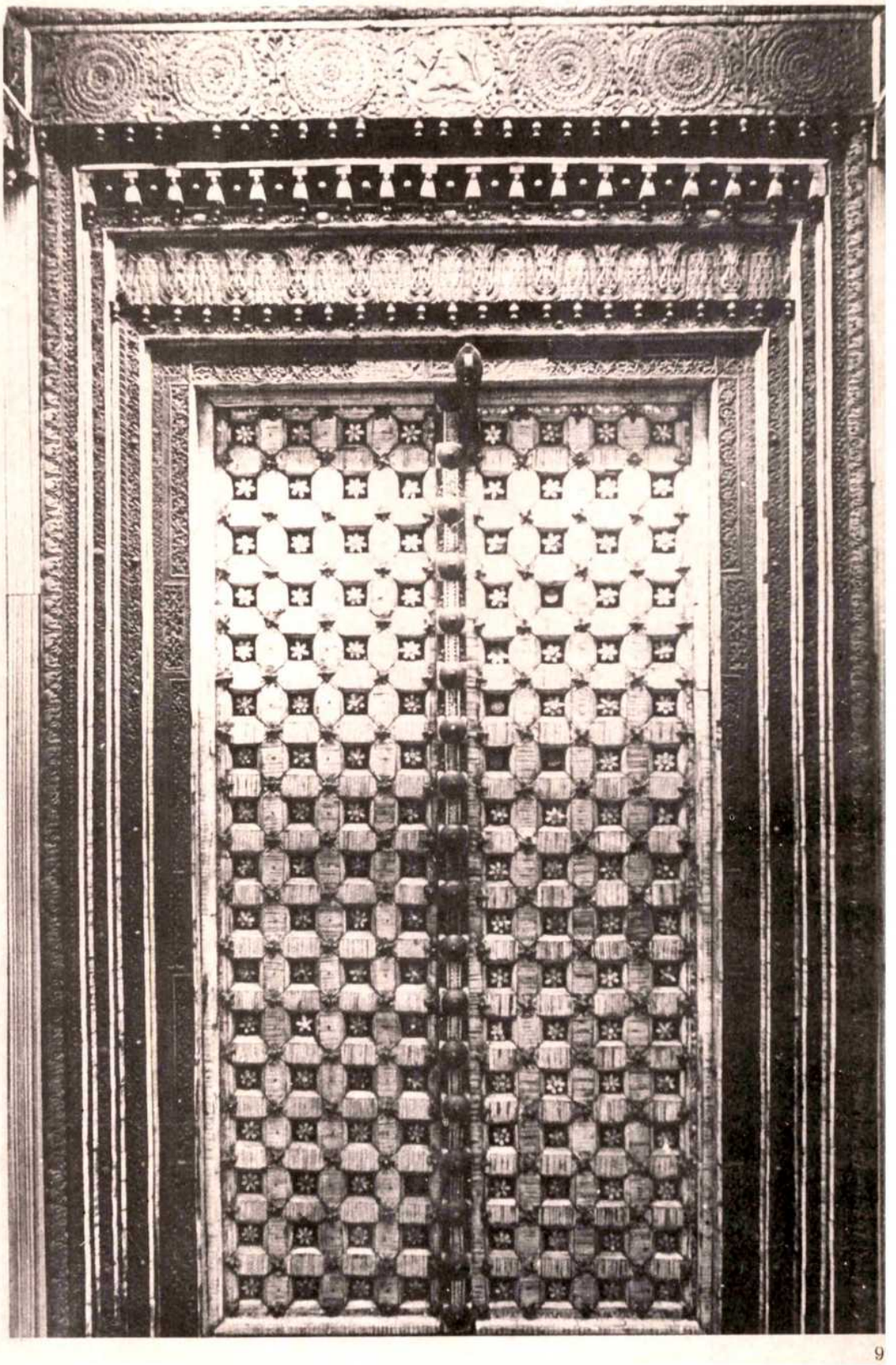
95. *Folk image of Parvati and Ganesha as mother and child. The mother and child relationship made real for the householder.*

96. *Ganesha riding a tiger—an essay in a new kind of icon of the folk imagination.*

97. *An exquisitely carved, ivory-studded wooden door from Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.*

95

96



98

9

98. *Wooden dolls carved into an original doorway, perhaps meant for children's room.*
99. *Wooden puppet from Rajasthan.*

Deccan

The geographic situation of the Deccan is obviously responsible for the typical features of the carved wooden elements of the Deccan architecture. The Deccan forms a kind of girdle dividing the Northern and Southern regions of the country. The Hinduistic features of the Deccan school have their roots in the architecture of the Jain and Hindu devotees among the Chālukyas, whereas the Islamic influence comes from the mosques and palaces of Bijapur.

The Museum has an entrance door from Paithan. Paithan (ancient Pratiṣṭhāna) has been an old capital of the Sātavāhana and has witnessed various currents of the subsequent ruling dynasties. The door is low and small, but too massive for the size, It has triple receding door frame with the figure of Gaṇeśa in one of the lintel frames, the others being adorned with carved peacocks. The flat spaces of the lintel are covered with *jali* or perforated wooden plaques over a lining of *mica* sheets. Due to this device the perforated portions with *mica* reflected the light of the lamps at night imparting an effect of multiple small lamps in the lintel. The device is commonly used in the carved wooden furniture from Saurashtra.

Another Maharashtrian door in the Musuem is from Talegaon near Pune. This one, too, is low and massive with triple receding door frame. On the upper-most lintel frame there are fine creepers with ivory inlay; the central lintel has projecting peacocks and the lowest one is adorned with the figure of Gaṇeśa.

Ratnagiri and Aurangabad are two known centres of inlay work in wood in Maharashtra.

The South

The wood carving of the South has the same typical identity as the Dravidian style of architecture. The central structure of a Dravidian temple might be a small insignificant structure, but a series of *gopuram* or gates and doors leading to it are most gigantic and elaborate. Madurai is a famous centre of the black sisam wood carving, and Bellary for beautiful doors with shallow incisions.

A large South Indian door, complete with two side windows, flanking the door in the Musuem, appears to be a temple door. A prominent projection from the lintel provides a kind of protection to the door underneath. The lintel is adorned with the central image of *gajalakṣmī*. The door has two flaps, each of them having a handle in the form of a little *vyāla* figure. The flaps are divided into several rectangular compartments with the help of carved ornate borders. In the compartments there are images of Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya, Pārvatī and Kārtikeya, Śiva Nāṭarāja, Gaṇeśa with a child on lap, Kārtikeya and consort, and Śiva and an ascetic.

Miscellaneous Wooden Objects

Besides the doors and windows of exquisite quality in the Musuem, there are a few painted wooden sculptures of the later period from South India and Maharashtra. The giant-sized *vyāla* figures and those of Viṣṇu, Agni, etc. are massive and stiff with protruding eyes and elaborate surface ornamentation. Two slightly smaller than life size statues of mother and child originating from Pune are finely carved and painted having more or less the same style and charm as the good-quality glass paintings of the nineteenth century.

A remarkable category of objects in the Musuem are six carved wooden rolling carts for children to learn to stand up and walk a few steps while holding and leaning on the cart. These carts made of light square and triangular frames have two wheels at the back and one in the front. In the case of these ornate South Indian ones the frames are beautifully carved or lathe turned and embellished with floral and faunal motifs, and at least in one case with the figure of child Kṛṣṇa sucking his finger, or licking butter.

—JYOTINDRA JAIN

1. Taitirīya Brāhmana, II.8.9.6, A.S.S., Poona, 1898

Artefacts for Use in Writing:
Ink wells and Pen cases

The Western concept of pre-history, proto-history and history are based on whether or not, in a certain period the art of writing was known. At a certain stage the owners of Harappa culture had known writing and had left evidences in the form of terracotta seals having pictographic characters. The Vedic Aryans who had much advanced material culture and beautiful poetry remained 'illiterate' as they had not known the art of writing. In the later Vedic period too, however, there are no such references; one might venture to think that the art had existed, because the art of writing as evident from the elaborate Brahmi inscriptions of Asoka could not have evolved overnight. Because of similarities of the flood legend of Manu and the fish and that of Noah's ark which suggests Semitic influence, if it is understood that the Indians of the later Vedic age were in contact with Mesopotamia, it might be surmised that a Semitic script was brought home by traders which finally evolved as Brahmi. Whether Brahmi evolved from Semitic script or from the Harappan is a controversial matter. Another script called Kharoṣthī (lit. 'of the donkey-lip') which was clearly derived from Aramaeic alphabet existed in the Aśokan age in the Northwestern region and continued to be used in later times. As the time passed the Brahmi letters were more perfected and compacted to acquire the status of Nāgarī (lit. 'of the city') and Devanāgarī (lit. 'of the god's city'), which remains in use till today. The materials for the history of the art of writing are the stone inscriptions, copper plates, palm and paper manuscripts, textiles etc. Paper was known in China at the early Christian centuries and whether it was known in India at the same time is uncertain. The earliest available manuscripts are those of palm leaf on which letters are inscribed with stylus and black powder filled inside the trenches to impart contrast. In some areas birch leaves, thin slices of wood or sized silks and cottons were used.

Accounts keeping and manuscript copying were the two important uses of the art of writing, and therefore the art has remained through the centuries the monopoly of the Brahmin and the Bania castes, who also adopted the occupations of teachers, medical practitioners and *paṇḍits*. Some of the earliest palm and paper manuscripts of Western India happen to be Jaina manuscripts. This is not an accident, because this exclusively rich and trading community of Banias had mastered the art of keeping systematic business records.

Ink has been the most suited writing medium. By dipping a pointed reed pen in ink made from lamp black, the paper manuscripts were written. The ink was made at home by boiling a solution of water, gum, certain herbs and lamp-black. The ink thus prepared was stored in large jars and was taken out in small quantities in ink pots for daily use. Pens with different tip thicknesses were also prepared in quantity and kept in pen cases which were either attached to the ink wells or were independent boxes.

A Bania merchant spent more time with his ink pots and reed pens than with his own wife and children, and therefore the most sophisticated ones allowed themselves the luxury of possessing elaborately ornate ink wells and pen cases.

The collection of ink wells and pen cases in the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum is fairly representative of the variety of designs and areas of origin.

Almost all the ink wells are made of brass either by casting or by forging. The simple ones are just circular or cylindrical bottles with narrow mouth.

The more ornate ones have animal forms, such as elephant, horses, camels, lions, tortoise, parrots, peacocks, swans. These can be divided into two classes, namely those where the body of the animal or the bird itself forms the ink well, and those where the well or the bottle part is of cylindrical or leaf or flower shape and where the animal or bird forms are affixed from outside.

In most cases of the former class, where the body of the animal serves as the bottle, the lid consists of figures of riders, birds or pointed knobs.

In the latter class of cylindrical bottles adorned with animals etc, the head of the animal (elephant or horse) is attached on one side or on two sides or in some cases in all four directions.

Often a rider is shown mounting the animal.

In some rare cases multi-armed Gaṇeśa is shown riding a horse or an elephant. It is not surprising to see the figures of this popular deity and those of elephants (connected with Lakṣmī, the Goddess of Wealth) on the ink wells, because in many parts of the country at the time of New Year the new account books are opened and the ink pots, the pens and even the account books are worshipped in anticipation of the favour of the goddess Lakṣmī and Gaṇeśa.

One of the popular forms of ink wells is a bottle with a flouted belly or cylindrical container having a pagoda-like pointed and tapering multi-tiered lid. Usually at the base of such a bottle a metal pen case is attached which consists of two long brass pipes joined together by a perforated screen. In some cases the lid is tied with a chain to the body of the pot.

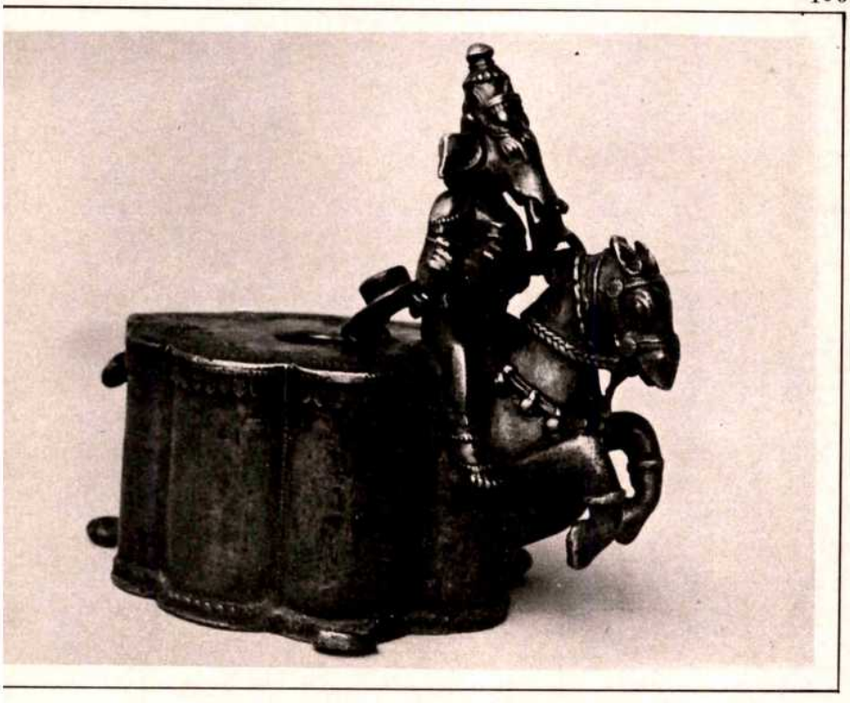
Most ink wells have three to four metal loops through which strings are pierced and tied so that the pot can be suspended from the wall or ceiling.

A few pots in the collection are in the form of a cart having four wheels. When not attached to the ink well, the pen cases are shaped as long cylindrical pipes or oblong boxes made of metal, ivory, wood, papier-maché etc. The cylindrical containers of metal have, in most cases, perforations all over the body and the cap. All cylindrical pen cases are opened at one end by a small lid consisting of a knob, which fits inside the mouth. The oblong boxes of wood are plain, or inlaid with ivory or painted with floral or figural motifs or are lacquered. The ivory boxes are adorned with fine incisions and paintings.

The interior of the oblong wooden and ivory boxes is divided into several compartments of which the long ones are for keeping pens and the smaller ones for keeping small metal containers, one for black sand and the other for ink. The sand container usually has small holes on the upper cover (as in salt and pepper containers) from which the sand is sprinkled over the wet writing. The sand absorbs the extra ink. Thus the writing dries up faster.

These boxes have delicate workmanship and the ink wells placed inside are rather small, which goes to indicate that these were used for casual letter writing rather than for daily usage.

—JYOTINDRA JAIN



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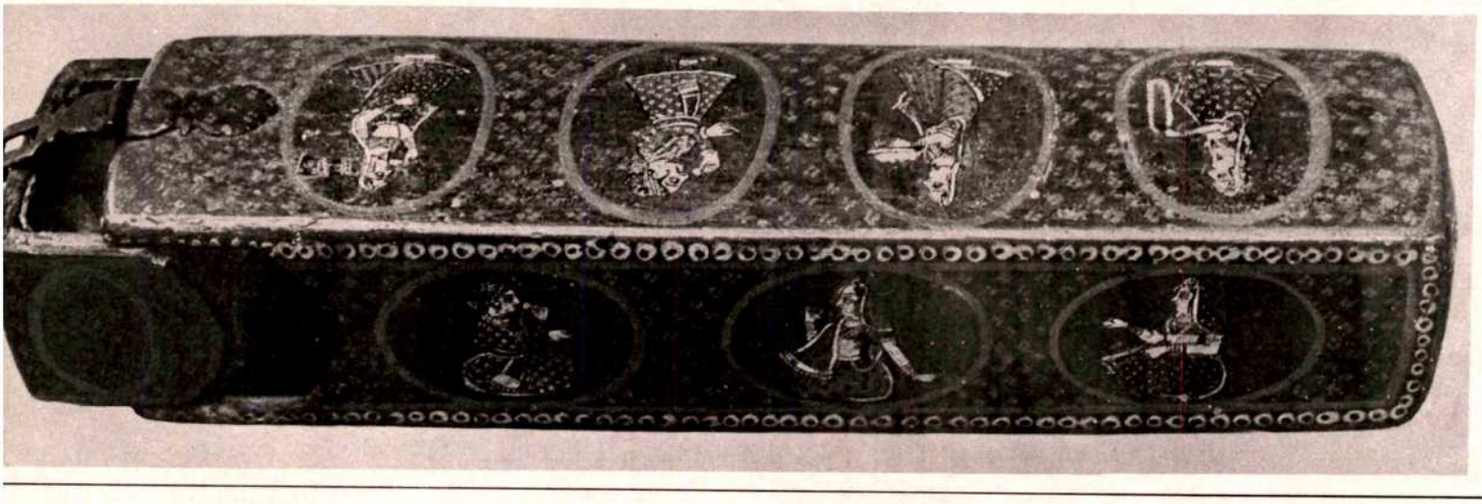
101

100. *A leaf-shaped ink well of brass having the unique figure of Ganesha riding a horse.*
Rajasthan, c. 19th century.

101. *An ink well of brass having wheels in which the actual bottle is in the shape of an elephant and cap in that of a rider.*
Rajasthan, c. 19th century.

102. *Gaily painted lacquerware pen box.*



102

103. An ink well in the form of a seated camel with a rider as cap, cast by an ingenious imagination to primitivist fantasy. Rajasthan, c. 19th century.

The Culture of Tāṁbula:

Betel boxes, Lime containers and Nut-crackers

'Coming out of the bath-chamber,
the King should enter
the pleasure-hall
He should then
summon the officer-in-charge
of tāṁbula
and then enjoy a tāṁbula.'

Mānasollāsa[1]

105

104. A brass nut-cracker with the blandishment of bells attached to the figures to amuse the ladies with the jingling sounds.
105. A brass nut-cracker depicting a family with a man, woman and a child. Maharashtra, c. 19th century.

A prominent section of the collection of the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum is devoted to metal containers (mainly of brass) for betel leaf and its accessories, such as catechu, lime, cardamom, cloves, etc. which are customarily consumed along with betel leaf. The entire betel leaf culture, seemingly of Gupta origin, is spread far and wide in India. Since there are elaborate descriptions in literature, not only to cultivation of betel leaf, areca nut and extraction and preparation of catechu and lime, but also about the preparation of betel leaf, auspicious and unauspicious occasions for its consumption, proportions and qualities of various ingredients, qualification of the eater according to caste, gender, etc., no wonder the containers for these were also variedly designed.

Before the collection of betel boxes and lime containers is described, it will not be out of place here to refer to the historical and ethnic aspects connected with betel leaf culture.

The most common and frequently used Sanskrit word for betel is *tāṁbula* (chewing quid) which keeps occurring in inscriptions and literature from early Christian centuries onwards. However, the most common vernacular words *pān* (meaning 'a leaf') or *vidā* (Marathi), *biḍu* (Gujarati), *biḍa* (Hindi), meaning 'folded or prepared betel leaf' are not derived from *tāṁbula*. In early Gṛhyasūtra there are no references to *tāṁbula*. *Tāṁbula* was probably introduced some time before or about the beginning of the Christian era in South India and then spread northwards. It is most likely that betel and areca nut were chewed traditionally in Ceylon and South East Asia earlier and from there via the South and East spread all over India.

The earliest inscriptional reference to *tāṁbula* occurs in the Mandasor silk weavers' inscription which says: "(just as) a woman though endowed with youth and beauty (and) adorned with the arrangement of golden necklaces and betel leaves and flowers, goes not to meet (her) lover in a secret place until she has put on a pair of coloured silken clothes. . ."[2]

As apparent in the above inscription, eating of betel leaf was predominantly connected with *śṛngāra*. In the games of love and erotic plays *tāmbula* had an important role. In the *Naisadhiya-caritam* of Śriharṣa. (12th century) Nala tells Damayanti: "Dost thou recollect, after passing bits of betel from my mouth into thine, I justly demand them back."[3] Mānasollāsa, a text on the royal duties and enjoyments attributed to Someśvara, a 12th century Chalukya king, mentions the consumption of betel leaf among the eight enjoyments such as unguents, incenses, woman, clothes, music, betel leaf and areca nut, bed and food. Since *tāṁbula* was deeply connected with enjoyments and erotic plays, it can be easily inferred that the accessories such as the containers connected with betel leaf and betel nut were also made with great care and imagination. However, there are scarcely early references to containers for betel leaf, areca nut, lime etc., one frequently sees in the miniature paintings, especially those connected with romantic themes of nāyaka-nāyikā-bheda, rāgamālā, rasikapriyā, rāsamañjarī, etc., depictions of utensils connected with enjoyment of betel leaf etc. These containers are shown lying on the floor near the bed or a couch and in most cases showing decorative perforations which keep the leaves fresh due to circulation of fresh air. In some miniatures a lover is shown offering betel leaf to his beloved or *vice versa.*

Betel leaf eating has great significance in the wedding rituals of most provinces of India. Folded betel leaf containing lime, catechu, areca nut, cloves, cardamom, etc. are distributed at wedding parties. The Kathi women of Saurashtra make highly ornate bags for keeping areca nuts to be distributed to the guests at the wedding parties. In Maharashtra there is a special wedding custom in which the bride holds a prepared and folded betel leaf in her mouth of which the bridegroom bites up the other end.[4] This custom is reflected in some Marathi dictionaries: "*vidi*—a roll of betel leaf, a clove, a slice of copra etc. given to the bride and the bridegroom for cutting

by the teeth at marriage ceremonies"[5] and "*vidi*—at weddings. A roll of the leaf of piper betel or a piece of coconut, or a clove put into the mouth of the bride or bridegroom, for him or her to tear it out with the teeth"[6]. Among the Marathas, the articles presented to the bride and the bridegroom by their respective fathers-in-law include betel boxes.[7]

In popular belief betel leaf is potent with thirteen qualities. There are also references to thirteen ingredients to be eaten with betel leaf. A known verse to this effect is as follows:[8]

> 'Bitterness, pungency, heat, sweetness, saltiness, astringent flavour, properties against gas, sceptic and phlegm and capacity to simulate eros, to lend beauty to the mouth and purify' it, to destroy all four odour are the 13 qualities of *tāṁbula* which are not obtainable even in heaven.'

These qualities of popular belief are recognized in most treatises of Indian medical literature. It is also believed that in a proper preparation of *tāṁbula* thirteen ingredients such as areca nut, betel leaf, lime, camphor, cardamom, clove, kankola, coconut, almond, nutmeg, the bark of nutmeg, saffron, and catechu are required. The various medical and other properties assigned to *tāṁbula* might be due to the various ingredients employed in its preparation.

Apart from amorous and medical reasons, the use of *tāṁbula* is prescribed in daily life by Vātsyāyana in Kāmasūtra[9] where he says that "after cleaning the teeth and having looked in the mirror and having eaten a *tāṁbula* to render fragrance to the mouth, should a person start his day's work."

In most forms of Hindu worship *naivedya*, food offerings, are made to deities and *piṇḍa*, rice ball offerings, to ancestors. From literary references[10] and actual practice, it is amply evident that *tāṁbula* offering is an integral part of such modes of worship. Among the Vallabha *sampradāya* of the Vaiṣṇavas of Gujarat there are sixteen prescribed manners of worship of Kṛṣṇa, of which one is that of offering betel leaf [11] In the Nāthadvāra paintings of Srī Nāthaji it is customary to show a betel box and a pair of folded betel leaves near the feet of the god. It is interesting to note that in Gujarat and elsewhere at the time of installation of Gaṇeśa in the wedding ceremony it is often done by placing an areca nut on a betel leaf.

Being the articles of enjoyment the betel leaf and areca nut are prohibited by the authors of Dharmasāstra for widows, ascetics and the students of Veda.[12]

The earliest reference to the use and proportions of lime, catechu, and areca nut goes back to the 6th century.[13] This piece is so interesting and informative that I quote it *in extenso:*

> 'A moderate dose of lime used with betel leaves gives good colour; an extra quantity of areca nut spoils the colour; excessive lime produces bad smell in the mouth, but an extra quantity of betel leaf, pleasant smell.'

The number of ingredients used has an influence on the design of the betel cases. The large brass betel cases having multiple sections and tiers obviously belonged to a well-to-do household. For travelling as well as while working in the field, or cattle grazing, small boxes with two or three compartments were made. Often there were small handy boxes only with one or two compartments which were exclusively lime boxes, or boxes for lime and catechu.

The popularity of *tāṁbula* is so universal that in the later period full literary works devoted exclusively to *tāṁbula*, its preparations, qualities etc., came into existence. A 16th-century work on Dharmasāstra called the Jyotirnibandha contains 24 stanzas on *tāṁbula*.[14] Another full work

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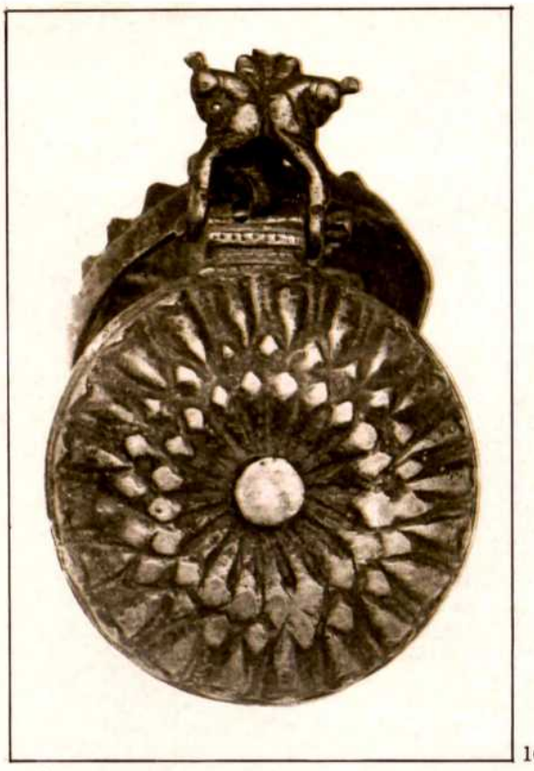
106. *A heart-shaped betel box of brass with perforation and having wheels.*
Maharashtra, c. early 20th century.

107. *A brass betel box in the form of a pumpkin.*
Maharashtra, c. early 20th century.

108. *A bell-metal betel box in the form of an elephant with wheels, carrying a box topped by a figure of a woman.*
Bastar, Madhya Pradesh, c. early 20th century.

109. *A circular lime container having a double peacock motif in the hinges.*
Maharashtra, c. early 20th century.

110. *A mango-shaped lime box with a row of small figures of birds and animals surrounding it.*



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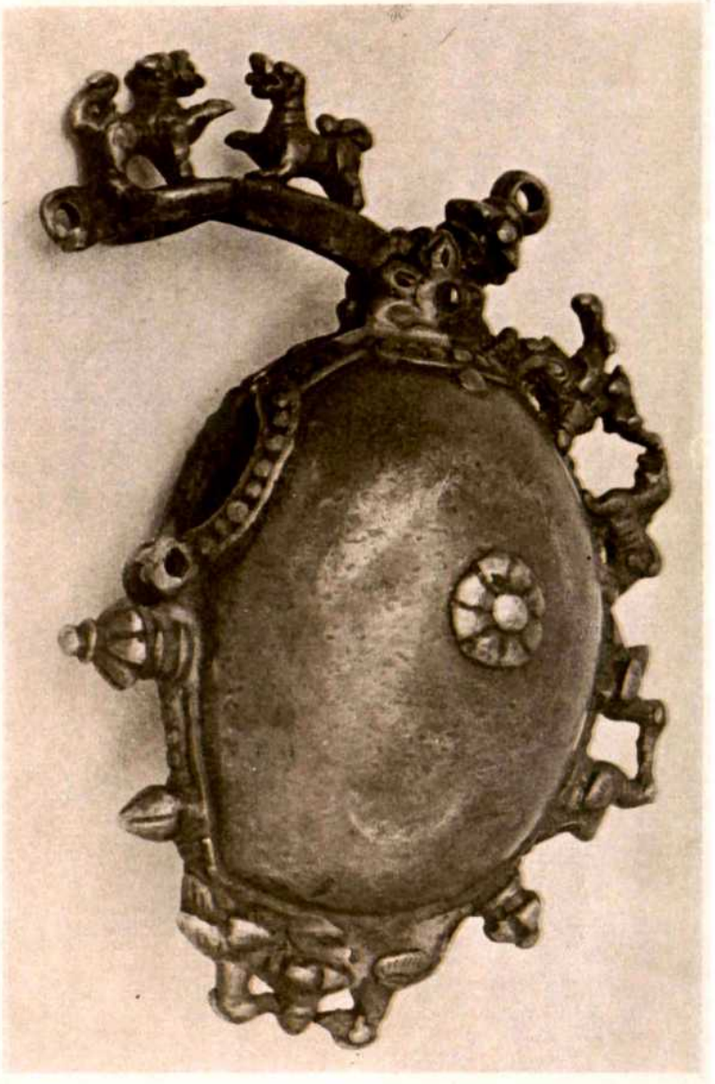

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devoted to *tāṁbula* is Tāṁbulamañjarī, edited by J. S. Pade and published under M.S. Univ. Oriental Series.[15] Mānasollāsa describes elaborately the different ingredients and their qualities connected with *tāṁbula* (sloka 799).

The collection of the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum offers more than 150 varieties of betel boxes and lime containers. The most characteristic feature of a betel box is the perforation work either in the lid or in the entire case. In addition to the quality of ornateness the perforations allow fresh air to circulate inside and thus keep the leaves fresh for a longer period. As in metal lamps the perforations seem to become popular in betel boxes too, as a result of Islamic influence which is so apparent in Islamic architecture. The boxes in the present collection are of various geometric shapes and of varied sizes—circular, rectangular, square, oval, hexagonal, octagonal, pyramidal, etc. Some of the shapes are based on such organic forms as pumpkin, melon, flower, leaf etc. Forms of peacocks, parrots, ducks, fish, swan, elephants, human heads, etc. are hollow cast and constructed into containers. Almost every box has an ornamental handle attached to the lid which often takes the shape of a small fruit, a ring, a flower, a peacock, a human head etc. In the cases where perforation work is avoided, the surface is usually adorned with chiselled or punched designs or emboss work. In some boxes small replicas of human figures and animal forms are cast separately and welded onto the surfaces. In some cases the boxes are embellished with metal inlay or *bidri* work. The large boxes usually have legs in the shape of lion's paws or parrots or peacocks, often with turned necks. Many a large box has wheels at the bottom. Such boxes were used for the entertainment of large groups such as at wedding parties, at dance and music performances, and poetry reading sessions, wherein the box could be rolled on the floor from person to person.

The boxes are with or without inner compartments. Often when the box is opened, first there is a flat tray on top for keeping betel leaves and a nut cracker. Underneath the plate there are different compartments for the ingredients such as lime, catechu, cloves etc. Before the introduction of *jāli* and the sophistication of construction, often the betel boxes were made of *khas* grass or even terracotta which were kept wet by sprinkling water so that the leaves remained fresh.

In addition to the larger betel boxes there is in the Museum entire collection of *chunali,* lime containers. These comparatively smaller and compactly designed containers have such fine and varied shapes that while looking at once at all the pieces together, one perceives the loving care on the part of the maker and the fondness and taste of the user. The most remarkable shapes include those of myrobalan fruit, mango, coconut, leaf, flower, fish, tortoise, peacock, parrot, swan, duck, horse, elephant, etc. The round containers in the shape of a ball and myrobalan open into two hemispheres and often have a chain attached to them. As in betel boxes the lid knobs have fine birds, flowers etc. In some cases even the hinges joining the lid and the box are ornately shaped, as peacock neck, animal head, flower or a leaf. To the chain that issues from the hinges is often attached a spoon to scratch out lime from the box. The designs of the variety of lime containers by stylisation of natural forms are fascinating, because of the various thoughtful devices contained within. The combination of charming forms and the functional devices make the everyday life of a traditional house much richer and devoid of the jerky dichotomy of art and utility. Art was separated from the conviviality of its users, it was certainly for the *rasika,* but not necessarily for the élite.

Nut-Crackers

The instrument for breaking areca nut is commonly rendered in English as nut-cracker or nut-cutter. Areca nut, slightly narcotic in character, is a fruit of the areca palm which grows in the

vast coastal areas of India. It is consumed either with betel leaf or independent of it. In spite of formidable indigenous production, thousands of tons of areca nuts are imported to India from South East Asia every year.

As seen in the section dealing with betel boxes, the betel leaf and areca nut culture can be traced to the Gupta period. But surprisingly there is no recorded and identifiable Sanskrit word for the instrument. In modern Hindi it is known as *sarota* which could have been derived from *sārapatraka* (sanskr.), a sharp blade. In Gujarati it is known as *sūḍi* (a small nut-cracker) and *sūḍo* (a big one). These words mean female and male parrots respectively and perhaps are so called because an average nut-cracker resembles the form of the bird. The common Marathi word for nut cracker is *āḍkitta*. It seems that the word is a corrupt form of combination of two Kannada words, *aḍaki* (areca nut) and *ottu* (to cut, to crack). The word *pophalphoḍna* for nut-cracker was common in Marathi language in the 13th century,[16] but seems to have been replaced by *āḍkitta* in the later period. However, in Sanskrit the word *śaṁkula* occurs as early as in Pātanjali's *Mahābhāsya*, but has doubtful meanings. It is understood by some scholars like V. S. Agrawala to mean nut-cracker.[17]

For a long time in the imagination of the connoisseurs the name of Dinkar Kelkar was synonymous with nut-cracker. As early as 1948, his collection of nut-crackers was displayed in an exhibition in Pune.

Out of the entire collection of 400 objects almost 80% of the nut-crackers originate from Maharashtra and the rest from different provinces of Southern India, Gujarat, and Rajasthan.

Most pieces are cast or forged in brass or iron except a few in silver. At least one piece in the collection has ivory plaques covering the handle.

Both the parts of the nut-cracker namely the cutting edge and the butt are intricately ornamented. Forms of peacock, parrot and swan are very common, but also those of horse, ram, dragon, winged centaur, sphinx, lion are employed in the design.

In some rare cases the lever with the cutting edge is surmounted by an image of Sarasvatī and of Viṣṇu Śeṣaśayin.

Many a nut-cracker is in the form of *mithuna*, an amorous couple in embrace, in which one of the levers is in the form of a man and another in that of a woman. When such a nut-cracker is operated, a hand of the man keeps touching the breast of the woman. In some nut-crackers, during the operation, the acts of kissing and parting are repeated. In some cases a sexual intercourse is indicated.

It has been suggested by some connoisseurs that these nut-crackers along with those having a ram or a lion belong to a series of zodiac signs, such as *mithuna, meśa, siṁha*, respectively. Perhaps more convincing and realistic interpretation would be to take the *mithuna* nut-crackers as amorous couples rather than a zodiac sign, because the culture of *tāṁbula* is deeply connected with *śṛngāra* and there are many literary references to transferring pieces of betel-leaf from the mouth of the lover to that of the beloved. Perhaps the Maharashtrian custom of biting off betel leaf by the bridegroom from the mouth of the bride is indicated by the nut-crackers with kissing device.

In one cracker there is a device that on one side it looks as if a mother is hugging her child, and on the reverse side it appears that a man is embracing a woman.

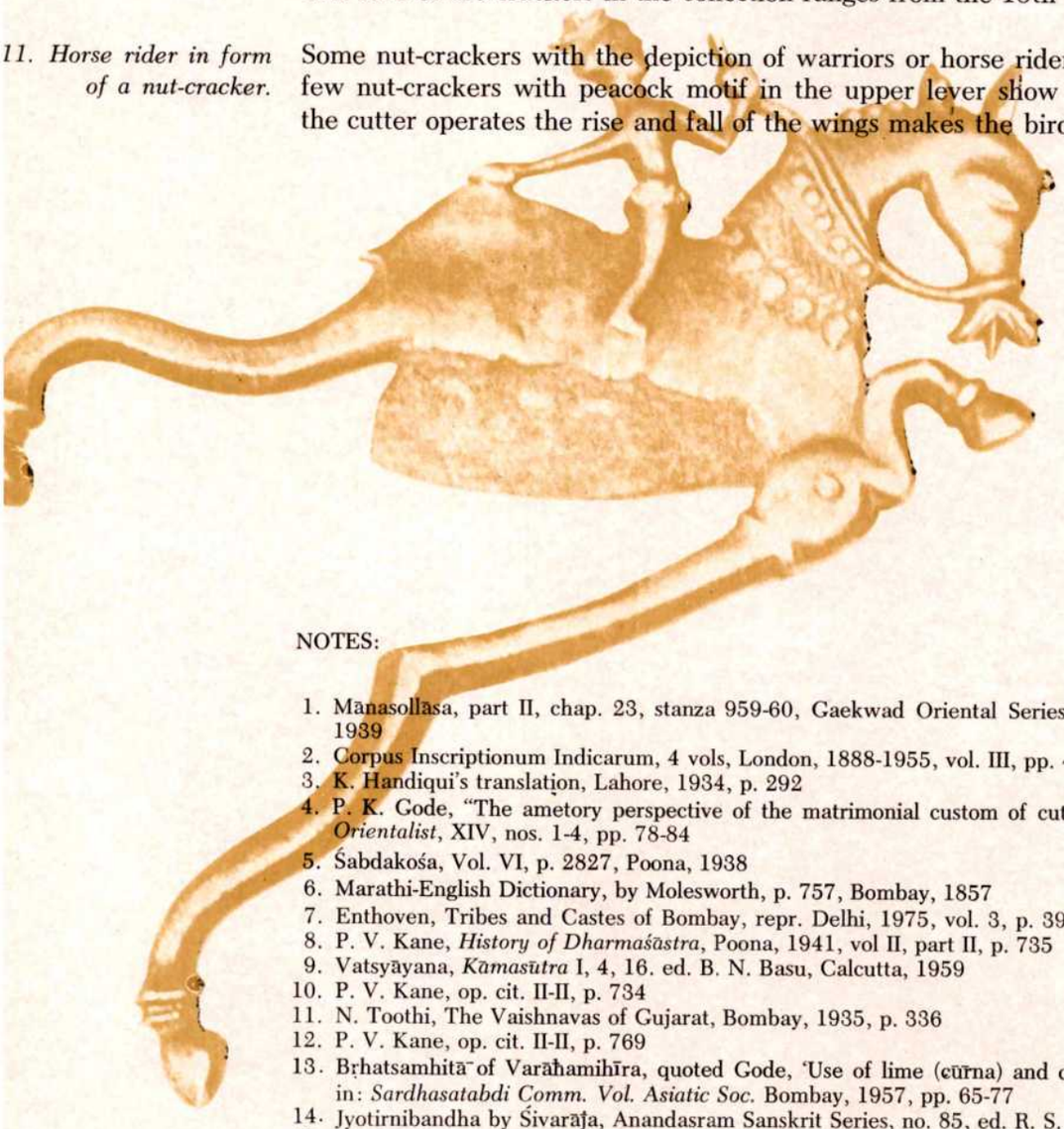
Some Maratha nut-crackers show various turban types ranging from those of Gwalior (Sindhia), Indore (Holkar), Baroda (Gaekwad) and Pune (Peshva).

In some nut-crackers bunches of small silver bells are attached to both the levers which make rythmic sound while using.

Some instances are nut-crackers cum daggers. The handles of these can be unfolded and turned back, and the pointed triangular blade of the dagger with two sharp edges (which function also as the cutting edges of the nut-cracker) project out.

A few pieces in the collection originate from Hyderabad wherein intricate *bidri* work adorns either or both surfaces.

The date of the crackers in the collection ranges from the 18th century to the modern times.



11. Horse rider in form of a nut-cracker.

Some nut-crackers with the depiction of warriors or horse riders originate from Rajasthan. A few nut-crackers with peacock motif in the upper lever show the bird with open wings. As the cutter operates the rise and fall of the wings makes the bird appear with fluttering wings.

—JYOTINDRA JAIN

NOTES:

1. Mānasollāsa, part II, chap. 23, stanza 959-60, Gaekwad Oriental Series, LXXXIV, ed. G. K. Shrigondekar, 1939
2. Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, 4 vols, London, 1888-1955, vol. III, pp. 46 ff.
3. K. Handiqui's translation, Lahore, 1934, p. 292
4. P. K. Gode, "The ametory perspective of the matrimonial custom of cutting betel leaf roll (vidi)', in: *Poona Orientalist*, XIV, nos. 1-4, pp. 78-84
5. Śabdakośa, Vol. VI, p. 2827, Poona, 1938
6. Marathi-English Dictionary, by Molesworth, p. 757, Bombay, 1857
7. Enthoven, Tribes and Castes of Bombay, repr. Delhi, 1975, vol. 3, p. 39
8. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Poona, 1941, vol II, part II, p. 735
9. Vatsyāyana, *Kāmasūtra* I, 4, 16. ed. B. N. Basu, Calcutta, 1959
10. P. V. Kane, op. cit. II-II, p. 734
11. N. Toothi, The Vaishnavas of Gujarat, Bombay, 1935, p. 336
12. P. V. Kane, op. cit. II-II, p. 769
13. Bṛhatsamhitā of Varāhamihīra, quoted Gode, 'Use of lime (cūrna) and catechu in tāmbula and its antiquity' in: *Sardhasatabdi Comm. Vol. Asiatic Soc.* Bombay, 1957, pp. 65-77
14. Jyotirnibandha by Śivarāja, Anandasram Sanskrit Series, no. 85, ed. R. S. Vaidya, Poona, 1919
15. no. 3, 1952
16. P. K. Gode, 'Some words for the nut cracker', in: *Vāk*, no. 1, Dec. 1951, pp. 38-41
17. ibid. p. 41

Artefacts of Beauty Culture:
Vajris, Combs and Textiles

112. Vajri, *a foot-scrubber of brass with two peacocks with elongated necks crossing each other. Maharashtra, late 19th century.*

Vajris

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The collection of more than hundred varied brass pieces of *vajris*, skin scrubbers, is unique not only because of such a large quantity assembled at one place, but also because of fineness of workmanship and the variety of themes, designs and conceptions. Almost all *vajris* are from South Maharashtra and Karnataka.

An average *vajri* consists of two parts, i.e. the pedestal and the crowning figure or composition of figures. The bottom of the pedestal having a rough surface created by criss-cross incisions serves as the grip by which the tool is held. The pedestal of almost all *vajris* has perforated lattice work. In addition to decorative compositions like the groups of peacocks, parrots, swans, there are scenes of hunting, wrestling, dancing, butter churning etc. Compositions of animal figures, involving a pair of elephants, or lions, or monkeys, or rams, or dogs, or a lion and an elephant etc., are most common.

In some rare cases, the themes of *gajalakṣmi*, a woman and child, a conch-blowing musician, a camel rider, a horse rider are depicted.

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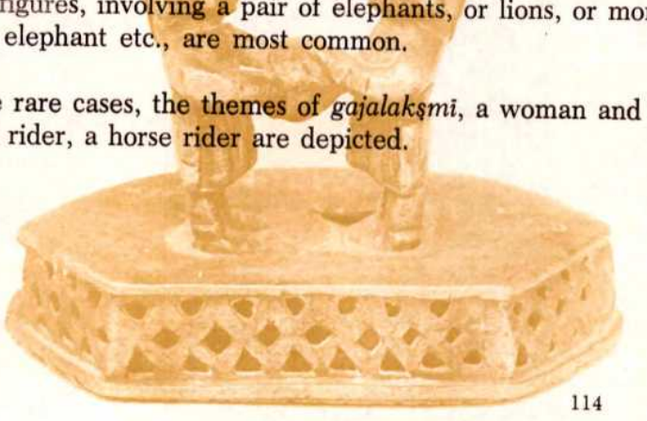

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Combs

A collection of hair-drying pins includes five pieces of two or three spiked hair-combs. These combs having long and rather thick spikes are used for drying hair after bath in which the woman stands in the open air and constantly combs the locks of her hair with the thick-spiked pin which arranges the disorderly hair and simultaneously dries them. Sometimes the handles of these pins are in the form of a woman, or deer or any other animal or bird.

A beautiful brass mirror-cum-comb-cum-bottle for hair oil is a rare example of imaginative construction of a toilette object. In this case the handle consists of a circular bottle of hair oil, below which a mirror is fixed in a rectangular frame, beneath which a semicircular comb is attached.

About fifteen *surma* bottles of brass, mainly of South Indian origin, are in the form of a swan, a peacock, a parrot, or a standing woman. In most cases the base of the bottle is in the shape of a tortoise. In the latter case the container is a sort of a double bottle—the body of the tortoise and the crowning figure of a bird or woman.

119

113. Vajri, *a foot-scrubber of brass in the form of a cage crowned by a peacock. Maharashtra, late 19th century.*

114. Vajri, *with two girls in play. Maharashtra, c, 19th century.*

115. Vajri, *with a woman churning butter. Gujarat, c. 19th century.*

116. Vajri, *with a lion and a musician. Maharashtra, c. early 20th century.*

117. Vajri, *with an elephant and a bear in play.*

118. Tribal comb

119. Unique combination of bottle, mirror and comb.

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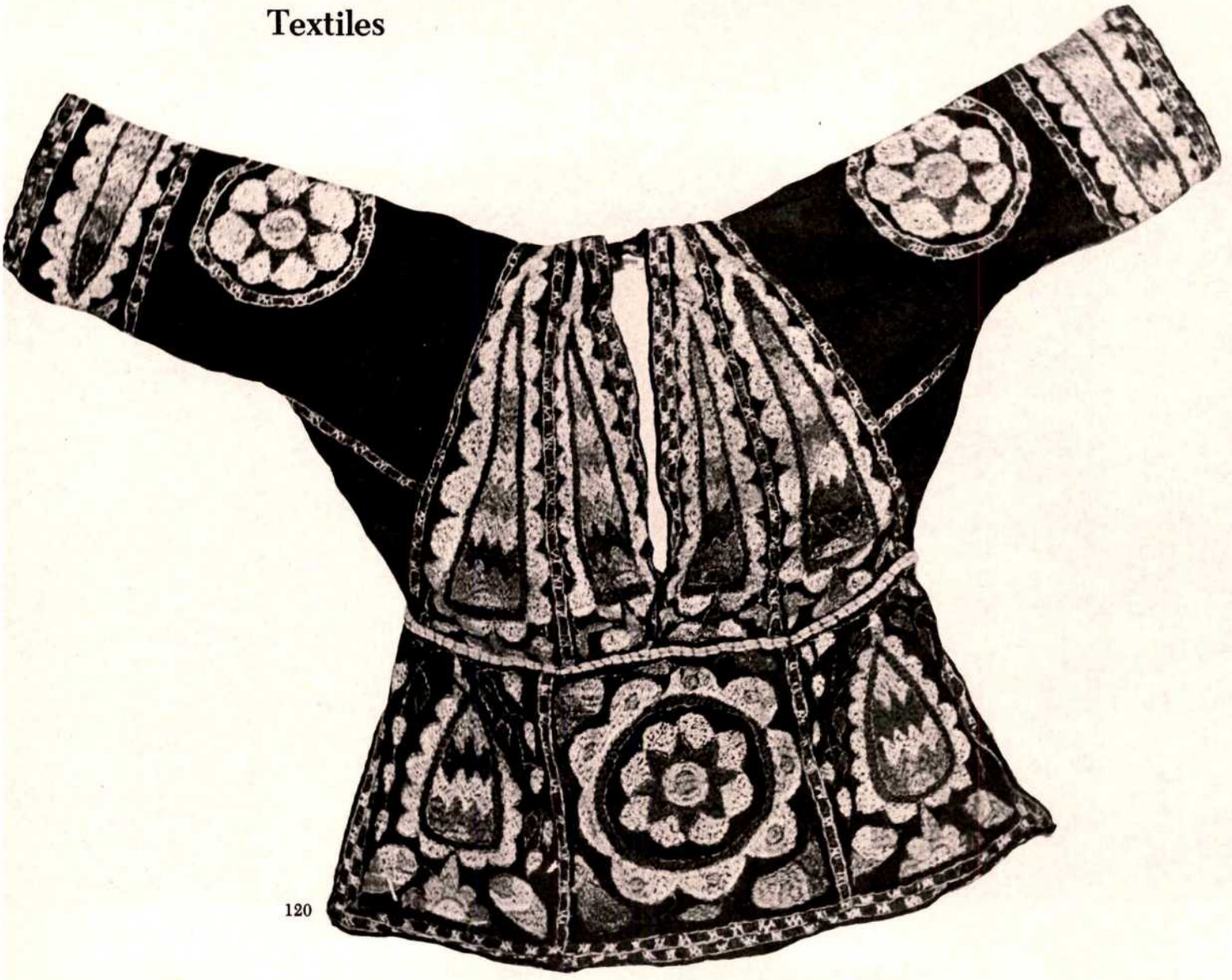

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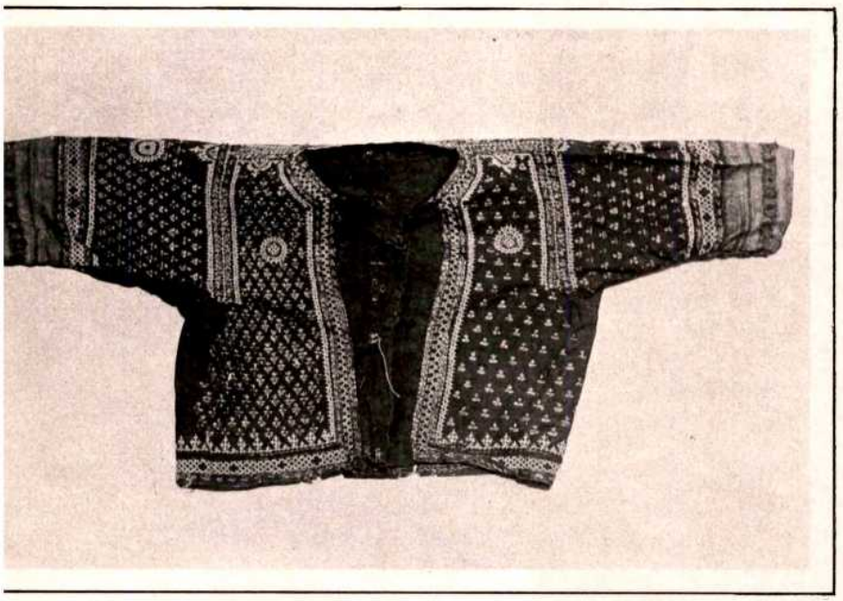

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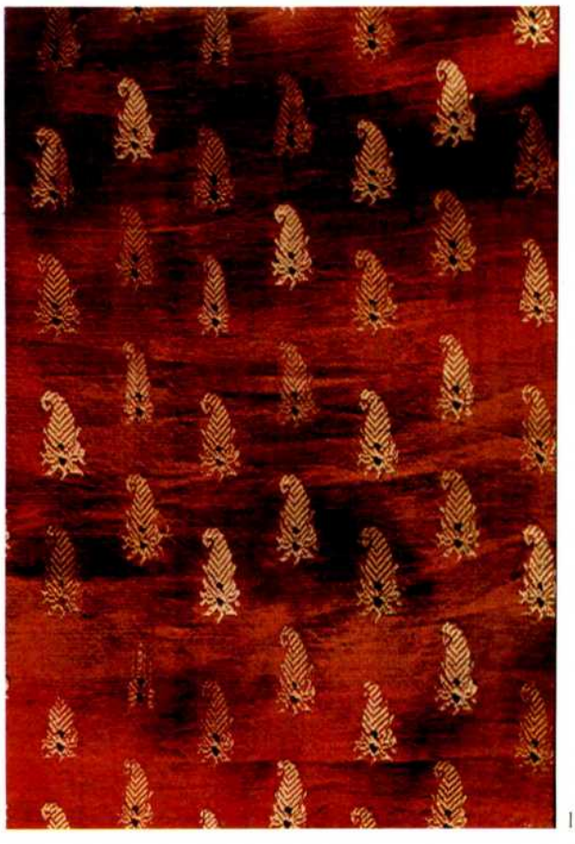
120-122 Cholis or upper garments for women embroidered with traditional folk designs.

123



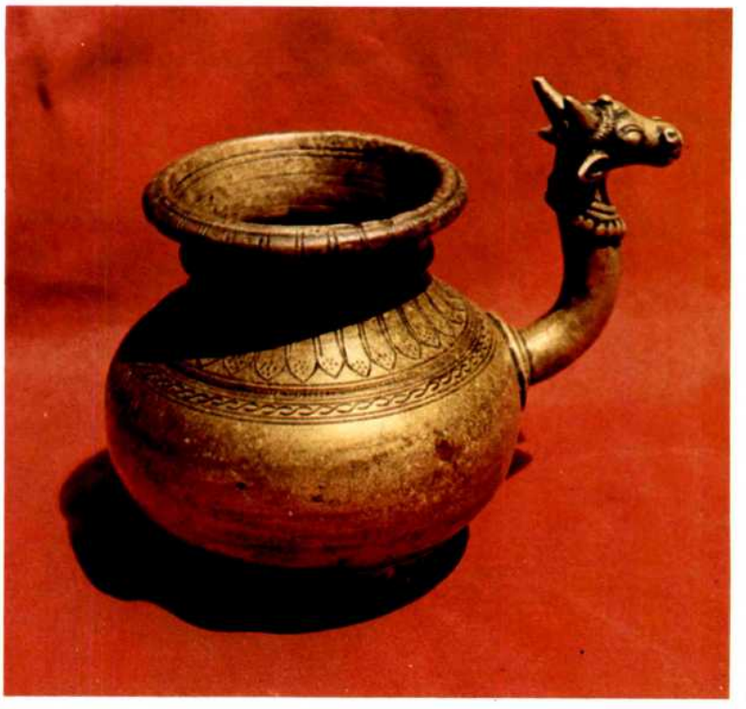
124

123. *Pallav of Paithan saree with paisley pattern, obviously affected by Bijapur court style.*
124. *Detail of a Paithan saree.*

125

125. *Detail of a vitalist figure of lion in jungle foliage engraved on a brass bowl.*

126-128 *Brass lotas with finely rounded shapes and floral engravings.*



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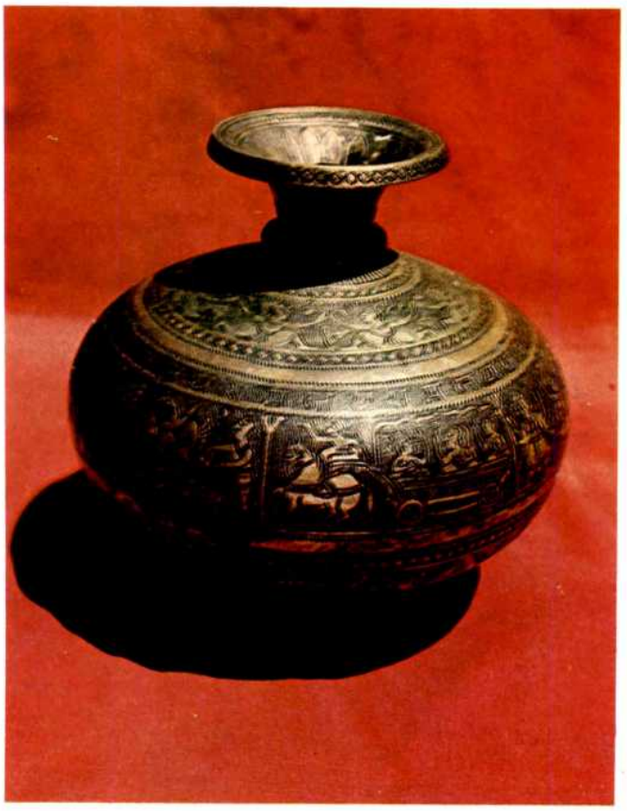

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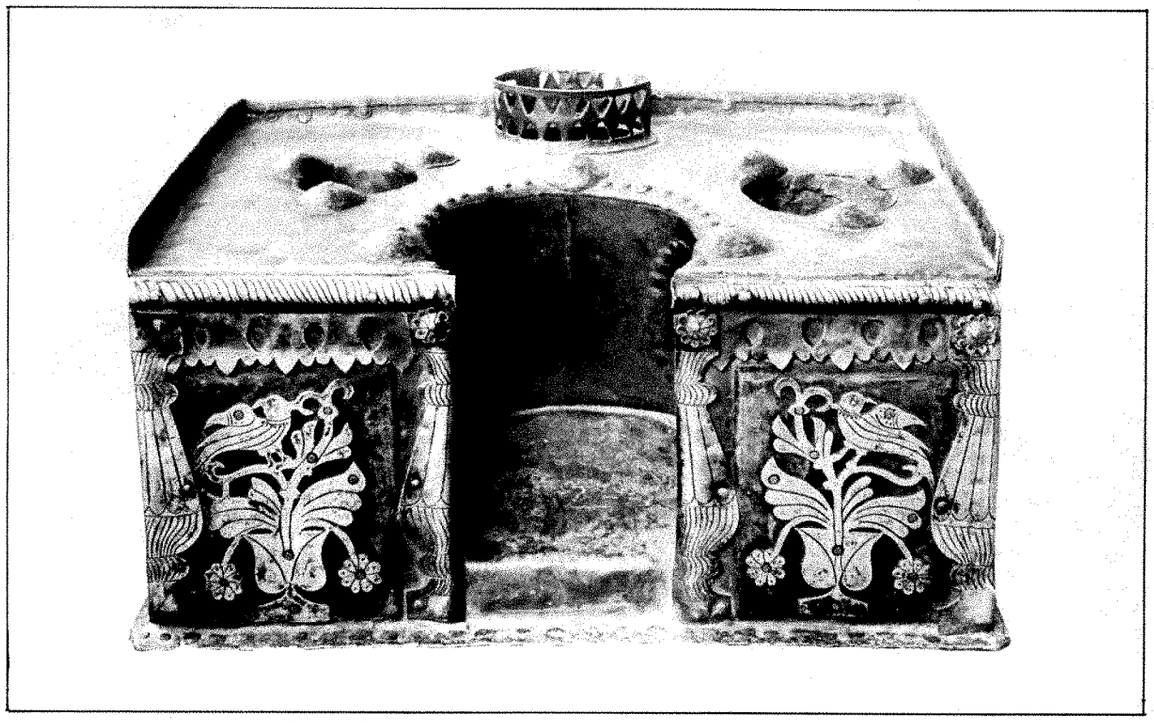
Miscellaneous Utilities:
Kitchen utensils and implements

A small and interesting collection of the kitchen utensils and equipments in the Museum includes a copper-oven, a few wooden spice boxes, some coconut and vegetable slicers, metal plates, wooden spoon hangers etc. Of these objects the most remarkable one is the copper oven. The oven is roughly in the shape of the traditional clay oven of the Indian villages, having two side walls and a back wall. In the front there are two semi-circular openings where firewood or coal is burnt. The hollow walls of the oven are constructed of double metal sheets, inside which water can be filled through holes on top. While cooking on the oven, the water inside the hollow walls starts to boil and thus keeps the already cooked food hot when the utensils containing the latter are kept on the side corners of the oven. The front walls of the oven are decorated with application of flower and bird motifs cut out from a brass sheet. The oven belongs to Rajasthan.

The vegetable and coconut slicers in the collection come from Assam, Bengal and Tamil Nadu. These beautiful and utilitarian objects usually have a wooden base (often ornately carved) and an iron blade rising from it usually in the shape of a bird. The silhouette of the forged iron bird is marked by extraordinarily simplified but forceful outline.

The technique of carving out of one block of wood, not only multisectional containers but also wooden chains and hangers, which give the appearance as if wattled, has been traditionally popular in Indian households. Two spice boxes in the present collection are typical examples of this. Each box is neatly carved from one piece of wood and has an ornate lid which is slid aside by rotating on a pivotal nail. The wooden spoon hangers from Tamil Nadu too, are carved from one piece of wood in such a way that there is an interwoven trellis pattern. The spoon hanger is suspended on a wall and the spoons are inserted through the holes of the pattern.



129. *A copper oven with walls of flower and bird motifs. Rajasthan.*

Smoking pipes

In the seventeenth century, tobacco was introduced into India and before the end of that century, its cultivation and consumption became so widespread that India became one of the three highest tobacco-growing countries of the world. It is not that smoking was unknown before the introduction of tobacco. Hashish, canabis and opium were known and smoked earlier. For smoking tobacco or hashish, canabis etc. *chilams*, small smoking pipes, and *hukka*, water pipes for smoking, were developed. In this Museum a representative collection of *chilams* and *hukkas* is displayed. Most of the metal *chilams* are in the shape of an elephant head, *makara* head or a tiger head. From the collection of clay *chilams* the most interesting is the one having five *chilam* bowls attached to one smoking pipe. Such a *chilam* was deviced for smoking various ingredients at a time.

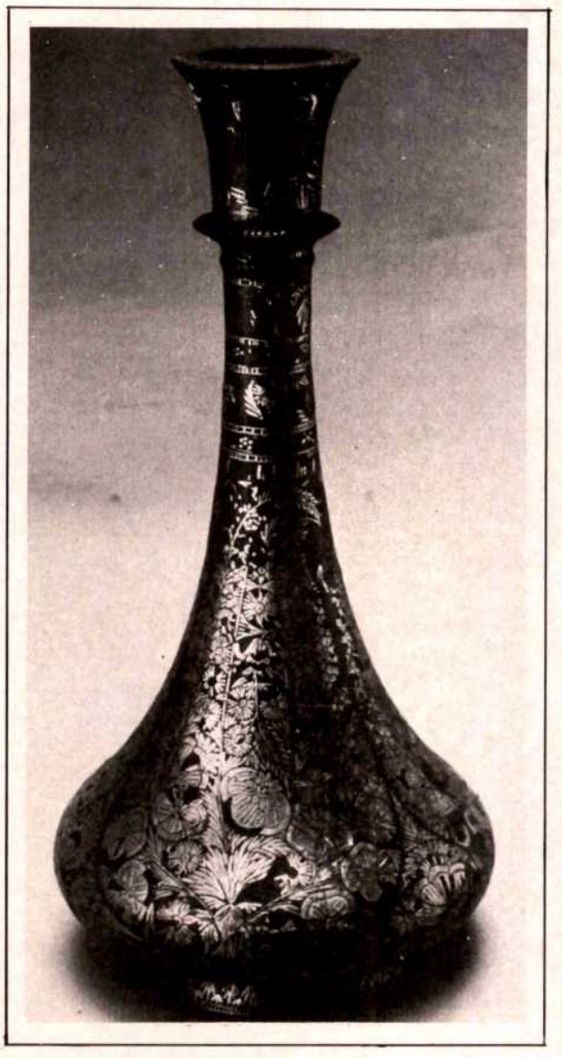
A *hukka*, consists of four or five parts, namely the *hukka* base, in which the water is filled, the central pipe through which the smoke passes over the water, the top bowl for coal and tobacco and the smoking pipe. Usually the bowl is of clay, but in some cases that of metal. In some sophisticated ones there is even an ornate metal lid to cover the bowl. The central pipe is either of wood or of metal. The most important part is the base of a *hukka*. The base can be a simple hollowed coconut, a clay pot or a highly sophisticated and ornate bell-shaped vessel of metal having incised or incrusted ornamentation. A large variety of *hukka* bases in the Museum include brass and copper bases, incrusted and silver ones, and those made out of clay, coconut and glass.

Spittoons

> 'King Bhima gave to Nala a spittoon which was very high and entirely made of rubies. Visvakarman had cordially presented it to king Bhima, perceiving Indra's esteem for him. On account of its halo of rays, beautiful as the rising high ascending sun, the people long thought: "It is full of the remains of chewed betel spat out by Nala, who is fond of betel".
>
> — Śrīharṣa's *Naiṣadhīyacaritam*[1]

Spittoons are essentially connected with betel culture and their use must be as old as that of betel boxes and areca nut crackers. However, spitting becomes essential when tobacco is consumed along with betel leaf, the antiquity of using spittoon goes much farther back than the seventeenth century, when tobacco was introduced for the first time in India. Vātsyāyana in his Kāmasutra enumerates spittoon as one of the accessories to be kept near the bed. In many a miniature painting connected with romantic themes, spittoons are seen placed near or underneath the bed. The most common shape of an average Indian spittoon involves a circular bowl at the base and a large disc on top. This Museum possesses a fairly large collection of spittoons mainly of *bidri* work originating from Hyderabad area. Most of these spittoons are circular in shape, however a couple of them are square and rectangular. One rectangular piece even has a lid with a knob. Spittoons must have been an essential accessory of every Indian household, because it is one of the utensils brought as a dowry by every bride.

130-133 Hookah bases with bidri work and engravings meant to please the eye of a smoker.



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Gunpowder cases

In the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum there is a small but remarkable collection of gunpowder cases. Some are made of brass or copper, one of a snail-shell and the rest carved out of wood. The latter variety is unique in the quality of carving and painting. It is noteworthy that most of the gunpowder cases which vary in material and originate from different areas, are all in the shape of a snail-shell. As at least one example indicates, perhaps earlier the original shells were used and that later, when metal or wood was employed, the design continued to imitate the prototype. An early eighteenth century work on Maratha polity[2] refers to '*huka*', a vessel filled with gunpowder, '*dāru che baste*', gunpowder bags, and '*maḍke*', earthen pots filled with gunpowder. The word '*huka*' is translated as 'shell', a word that is used for gunpowder cases and bombs both in English and American.

Ras Mala, The Hindoo Annals of the Province of Gujarat[3], refers to the use of gunpowder by Mahomood Begurrah against the pirates of Bulsar by about A.D. 1482. The same ruler is described as having cannonaded the city of Champaner[4]. These are perhaps some of the earliest events connected with the use of gunpowder in India. In the following periods the Maratha, the Portuguese, the French and the British sources are filled with descriptions of the variety of guns, cannons and other firearms.

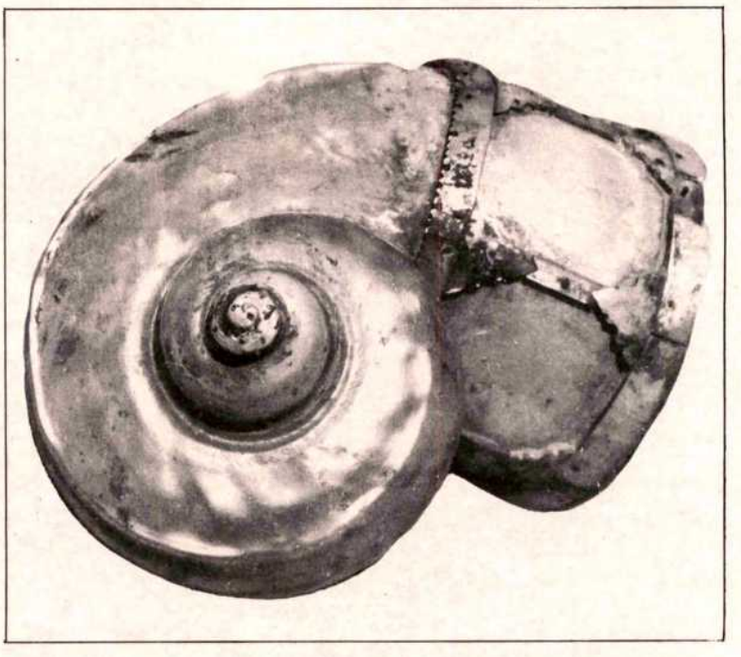
The gunpowder cases in this Museum are from the seventeenth century onwards. The carved wooden ones which are in the form of a coiled snail have a *makara*-like mouth, often with paintings of winged celestial beings or floral decorations. Some metal cases are in the shape of a horn. Most of the gunpowder cases in this collection are of Rajasthani origin.

—JYOTINDRA JAIN

NOTES:

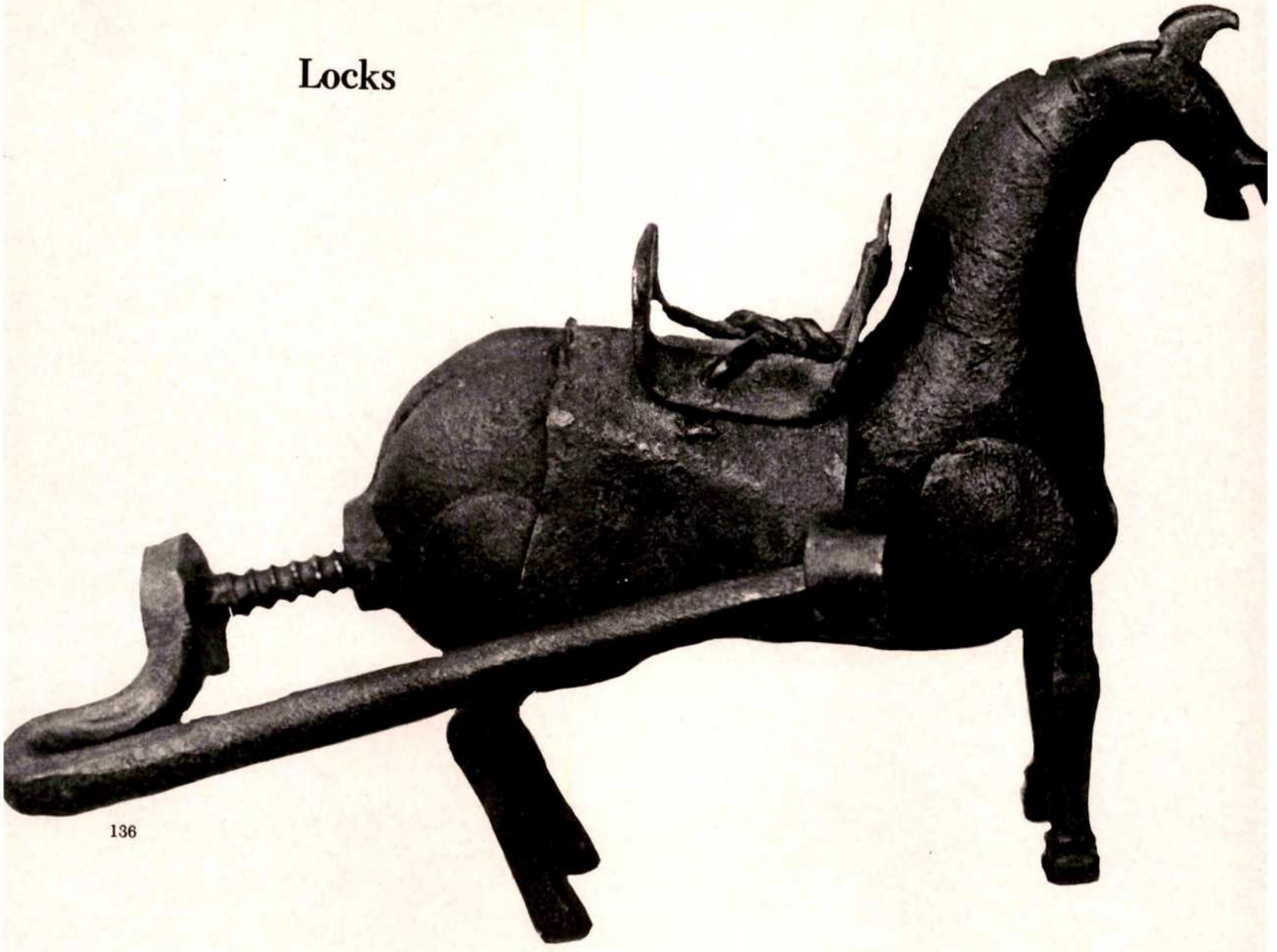
1. translation by K. K. Handiqui (Lahore, 1934), p. 228, vv. 27-28.
2. Ājñāpatra by Ramacandrapant Amatya, referred to by P. K. Gode "The manufacture and use of firearms in India", in: *Bharatiya Vidya*, vol. IX, pp. 201 ff.
3. Ras Mala, by A. K. Forbes (repr. Delhi, 1973), p. 4
4. ibid. p. 288

134. Gunpowder case in the form of a coiled snail.



135. Gunpowder case in the shape of a snail-shell.

Locks



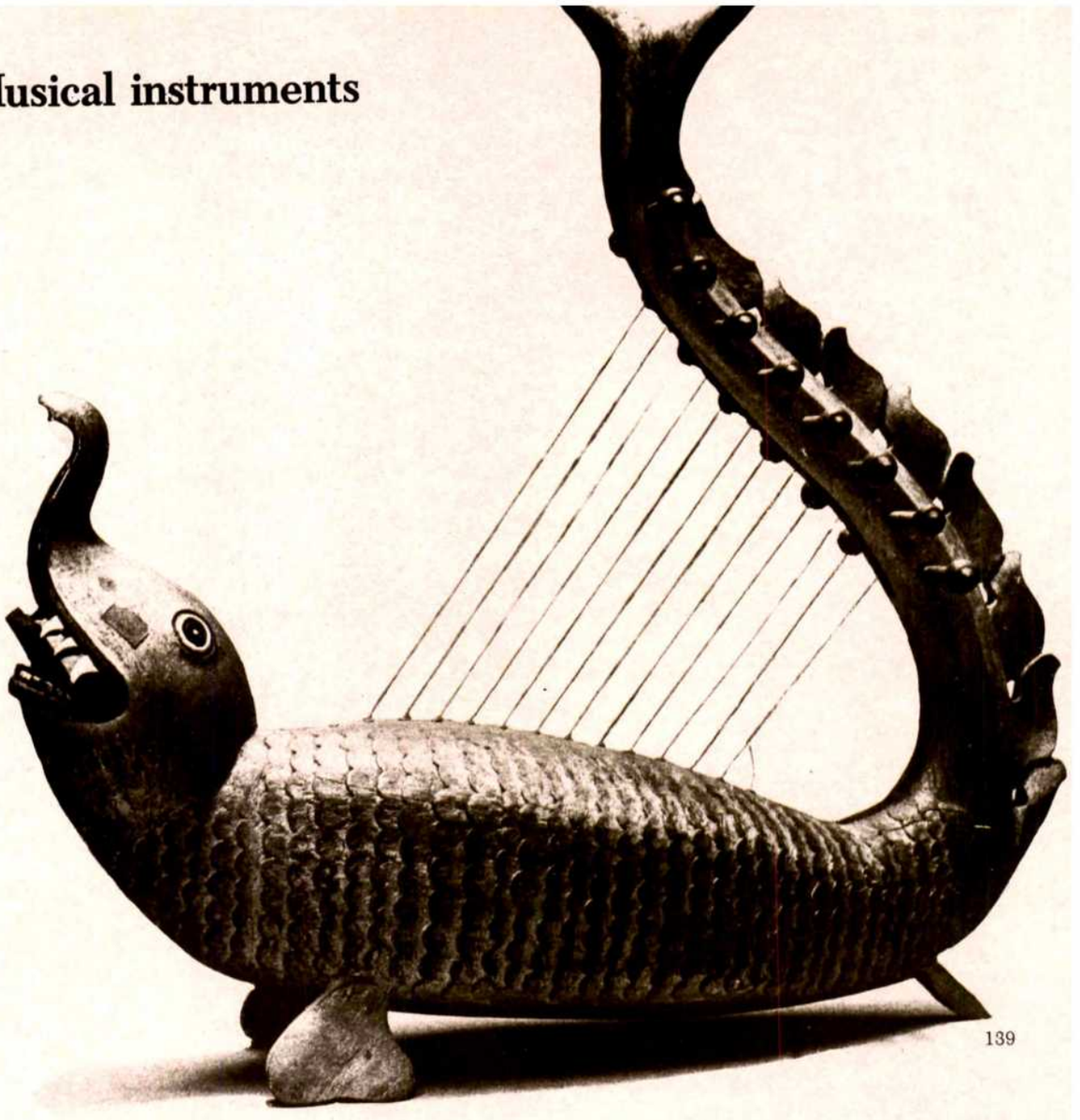
136

136-138 Locks made by fantasies run riot.

137

138

Musical instruments



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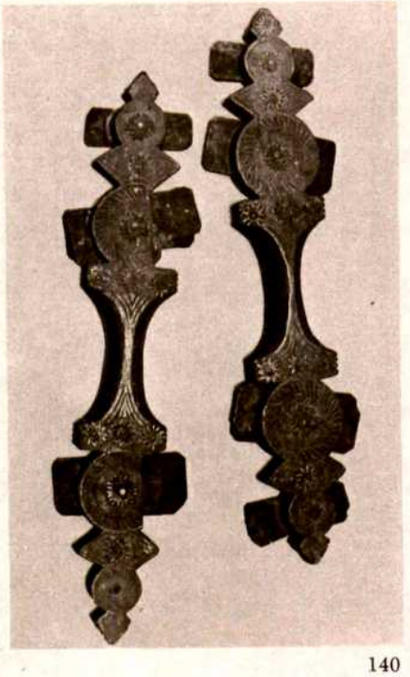

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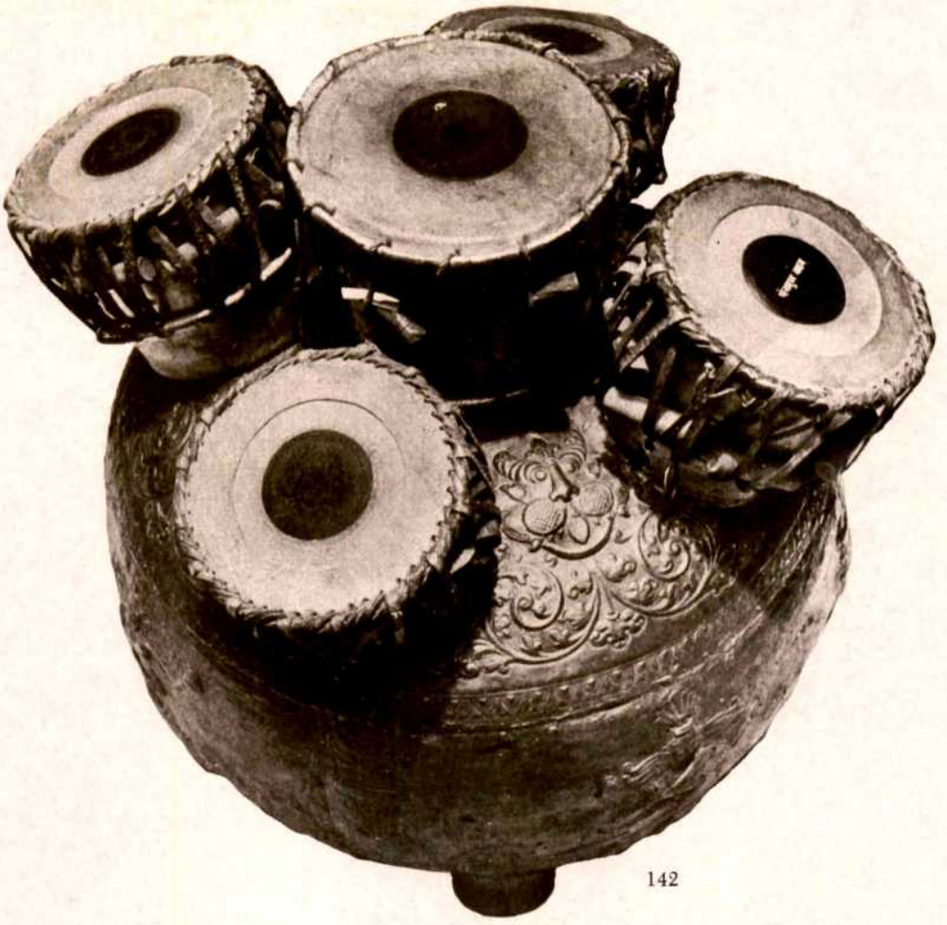
141

139. *Magar Yazh: a string instrument, an Indian style harp conceived as a dolphin fish.*

140. *Castanets probably used by royal orchestra.*

141. *Shehanais which seem to have travelled down from the north.*



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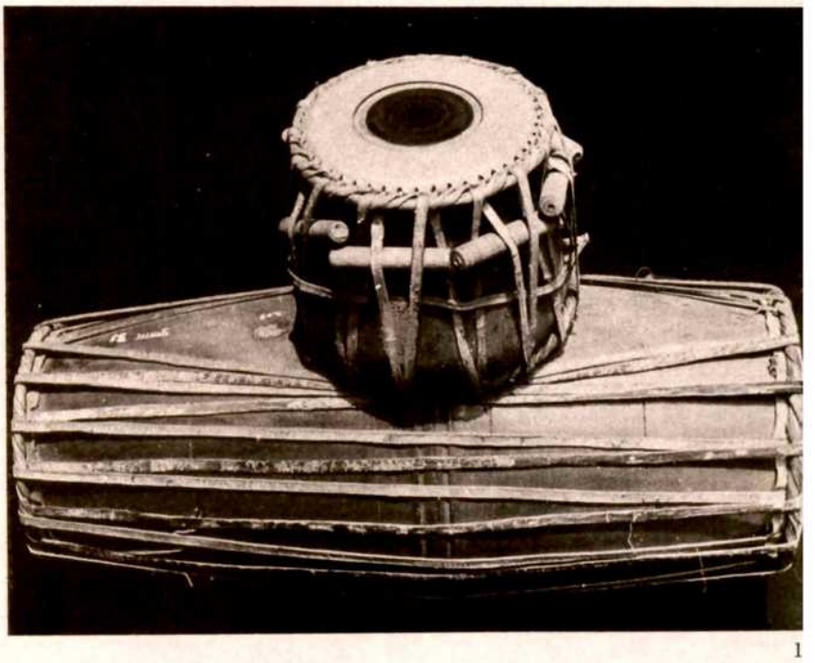


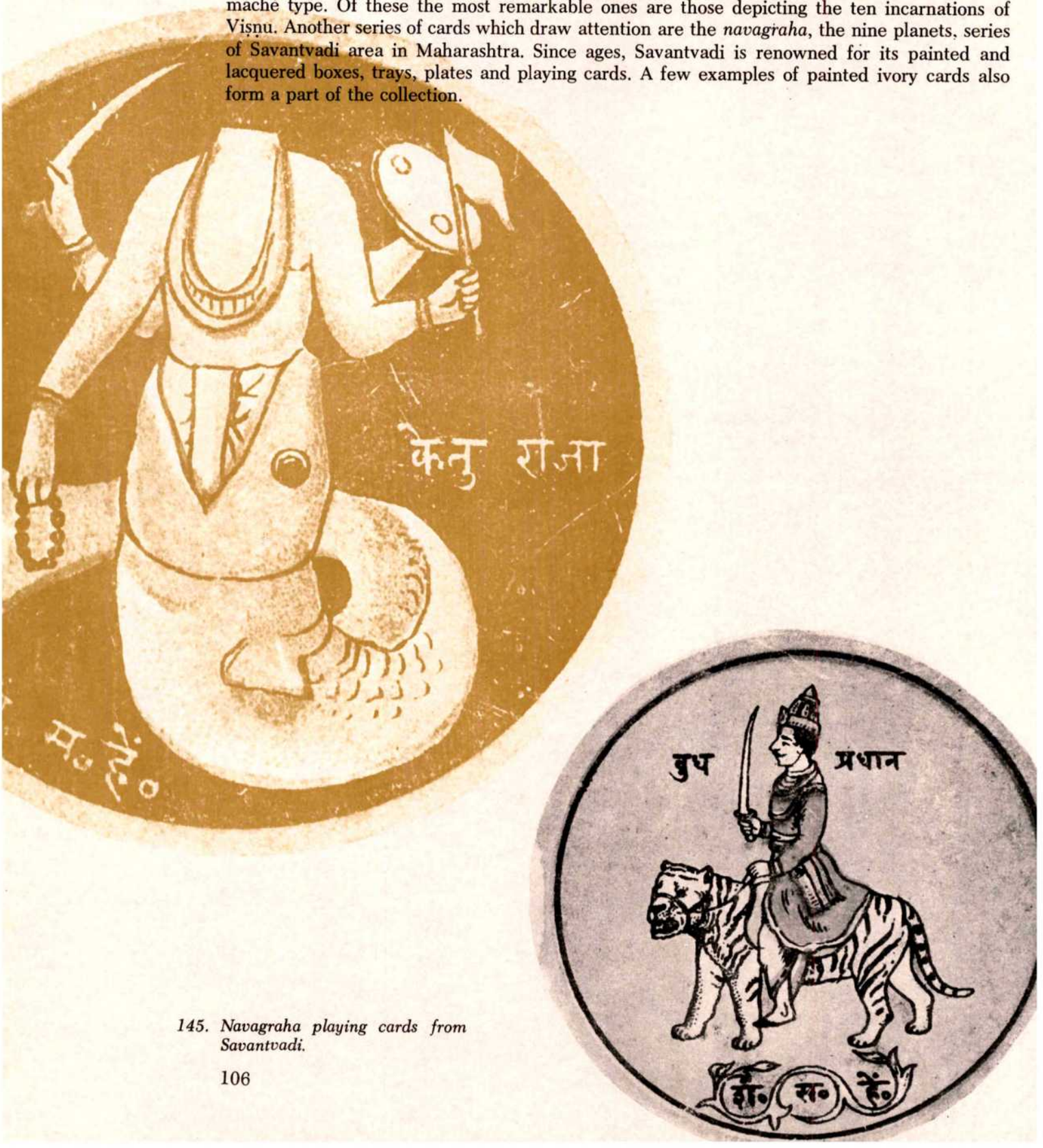
1

144

142. *Panchmukha Vadyam-(five-faced tablas).*
143. *Pushkaram: Pakhawaj with the tabla.*
144. *Earthernware based drums.*

Indoor games

A large number of dice and game pieces mainly connected with *chaupat* made of ivory, glass and metal as well as a variety of playing cards are among the indoor games represented in the Museum. The major sets of the playing cards are the circular variety of the Orissan papier maché type. Of these the most remarkable ones are those depicting the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu. Another series of cards which draw attention are the *navagraha*, the nine planets, series of Savantvadi area in Maharashtra. Since ages, Savantvadi is renowned for its painted and lacquered boxes, trays, plates and playing cards. A few examples of painted ivory cards also form a part of the collection.



145. Navagraha playing cards from Savantvadi.

The Caitra-Gaurī Paṭa

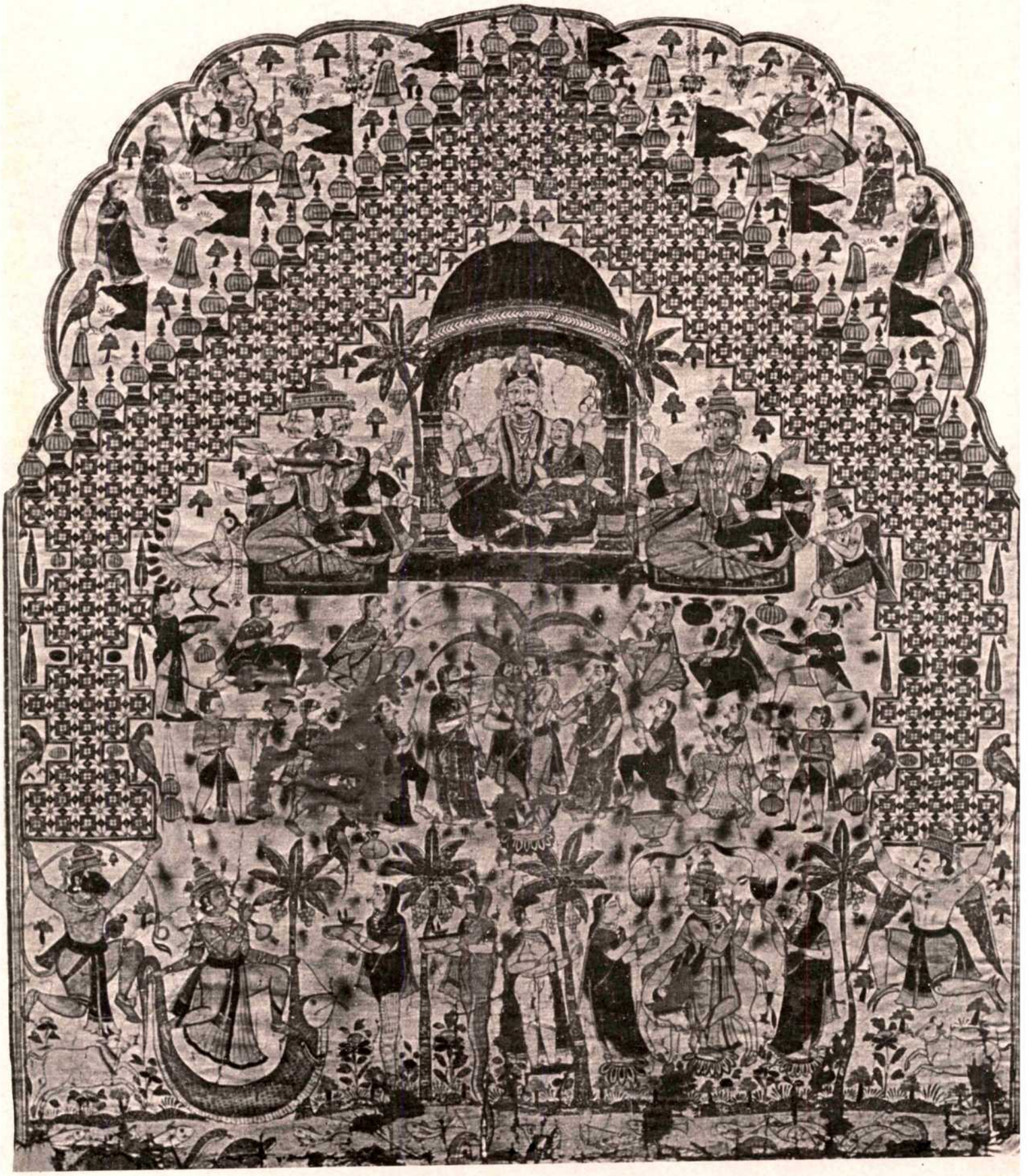
Caitra-Gaurī is the festival in honour of goddess Gaurī (lit. 'the Fair-one', Śiva's consort) during the month of *caitra* (the Indian spring month between March-April). It is celebrated popularly among the women of Maharashtra. Throughout the month of *caitra* there is a celebration in honour of the goddess, who is also identified as the goddess of spring. It is believed that the goddess Gaurī comes to the house of her parents on the third of the bright half of the month of *caitra* and stays there for a month. She returns to her in-laws exactly after a month on the 3rd of the bright half of *vaiśākh* month. During the period of her stay, a painted *paṭa*, a panel, is sometimes installed in houses and temples. (See colour plate 12, p. 15.) She is worshipped with festivity and exchange of invitations and food.

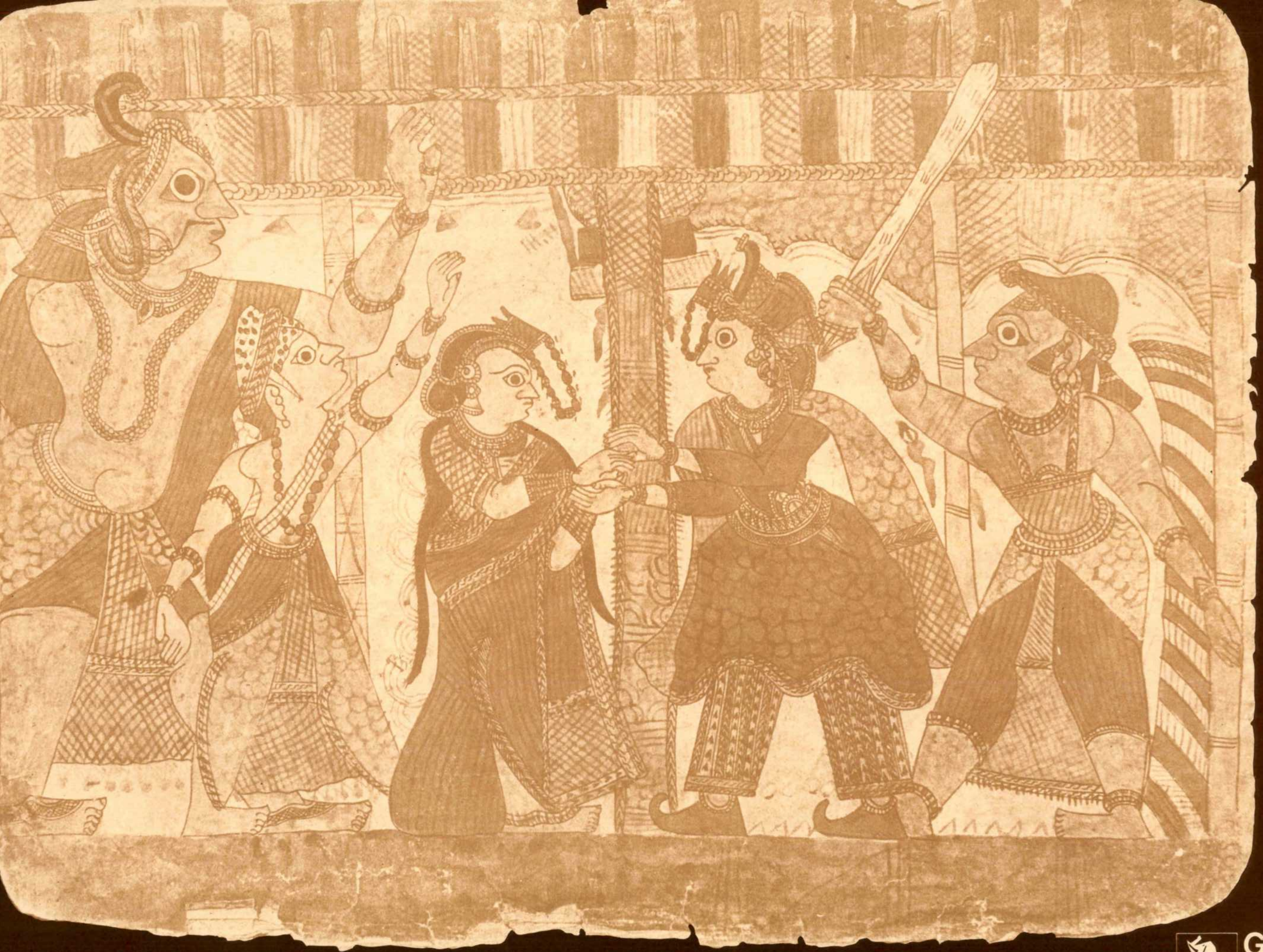
One such painted panel (pigments on cloth) is preserved in the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum (roughly one and a half by one and a half metres of dimension). The centre of the *paṭa* is occupied by the seated deities Śiva and his consort Gaurī (or Pārvatī), who are flanked by divine pairs on both sides. On the right it is Viṣṇu and his consort Lakṣmī greeted by kneeling Garuḍa in *anjali mudrā* (with folded hands), on the left side it is Brahma and his consort who is holding *cakra*, the wheel, and *mālā*, the flower garland. These three pairs of deities are set into a house-like framework that again is surrounded by a wavy arch. The space in-between these two frameworks on top is occupied by a figure of Sarasvatī on the right and that of Gaṇeśa on the left side. In the upper corners, on each side, Balakṛṣṇa, child Kṛṣṇa lying on a leaf and sucking his toe, is depicted within vine scrolls with grapes in which monkeys are playing.

Beneath Śiva and Gaurī, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are shown within a group of *holi*-playing *gopis* sprinkling colour. On the right side of the row there is Garuḍa, and Hanumān is on the left. A devotee with a *thāli*, a plate, and offerings is shown to the left of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. The bottom row depicts various scenes connected with the Kṛṣṇa legend, like Kaliyadamana, the quelling of the snake king Kaliya, and *nāginīs*, his snake queens, who are begging to save their king's life with lamp offerings; Kṛṣṇa playing flute attended on both sides by *chauri* bearing girls; and cows, always connected with the Kṛṣṇa legend, on both corners. The lower edge of the *paṭa* is conceived as ocean which is inhabited by various sea-animals like fish, tortoise, snake, makara. The whole painting is surrounded by a narrow floral border.

The *paṭa* originates from Maharashtra and could be dated to the 19th century.

—JUTTA JAIN-NEUBAUER





The marriage of Rama and Sita as depicted in a Chitrakathi painting from Maharashtra.

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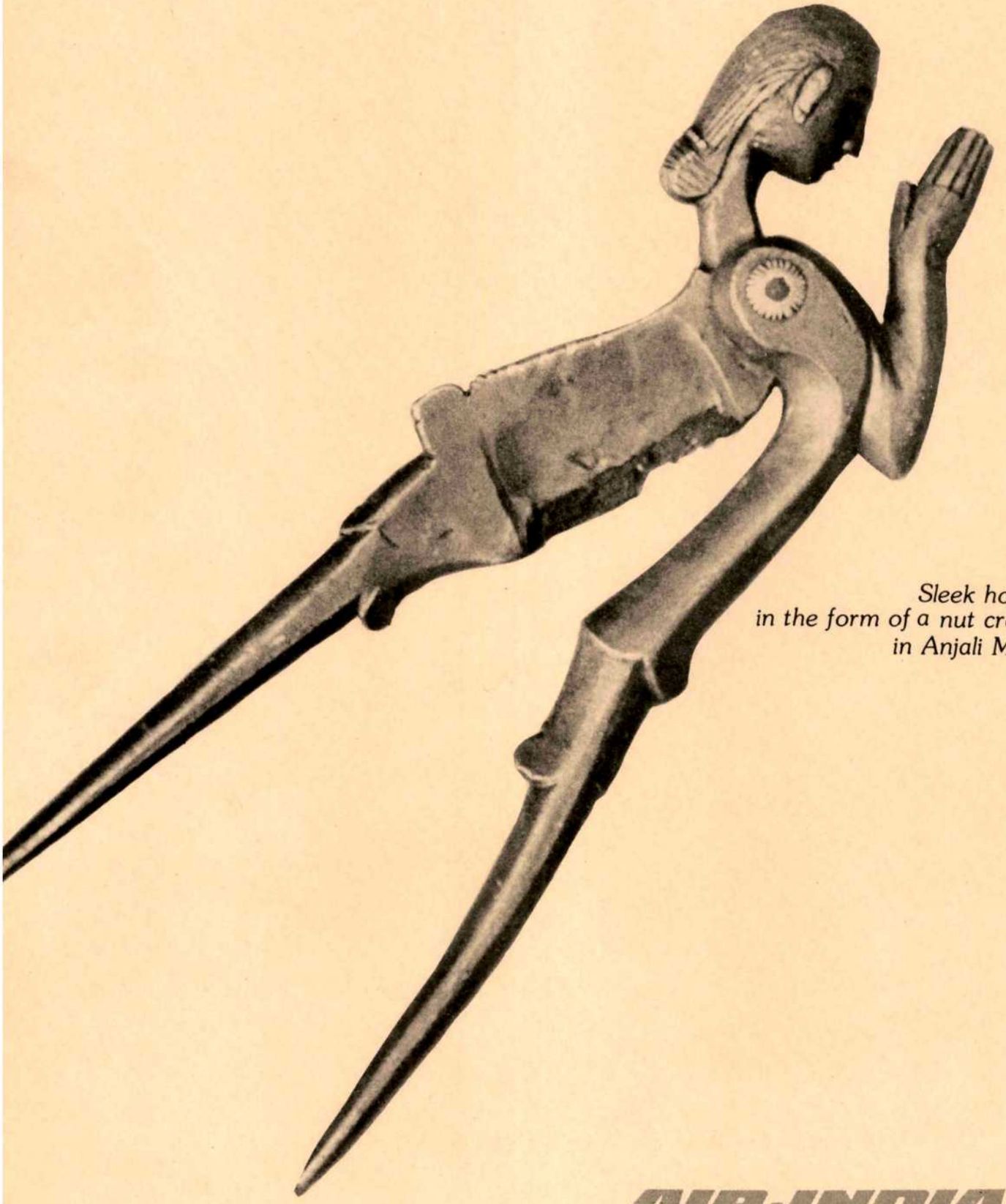

Sleek hostess
in the form of a nut cracker
in Anjali Mudra

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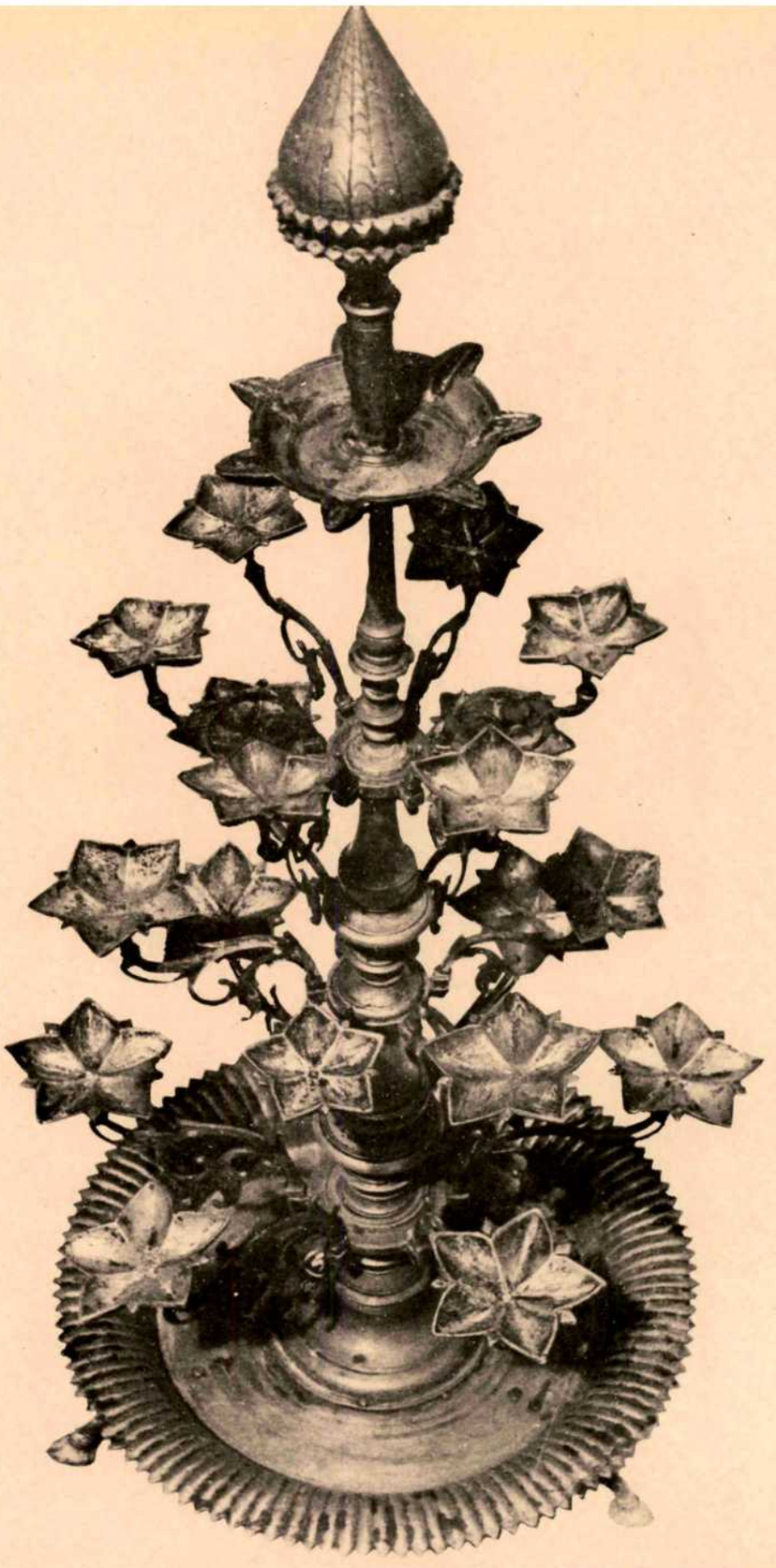

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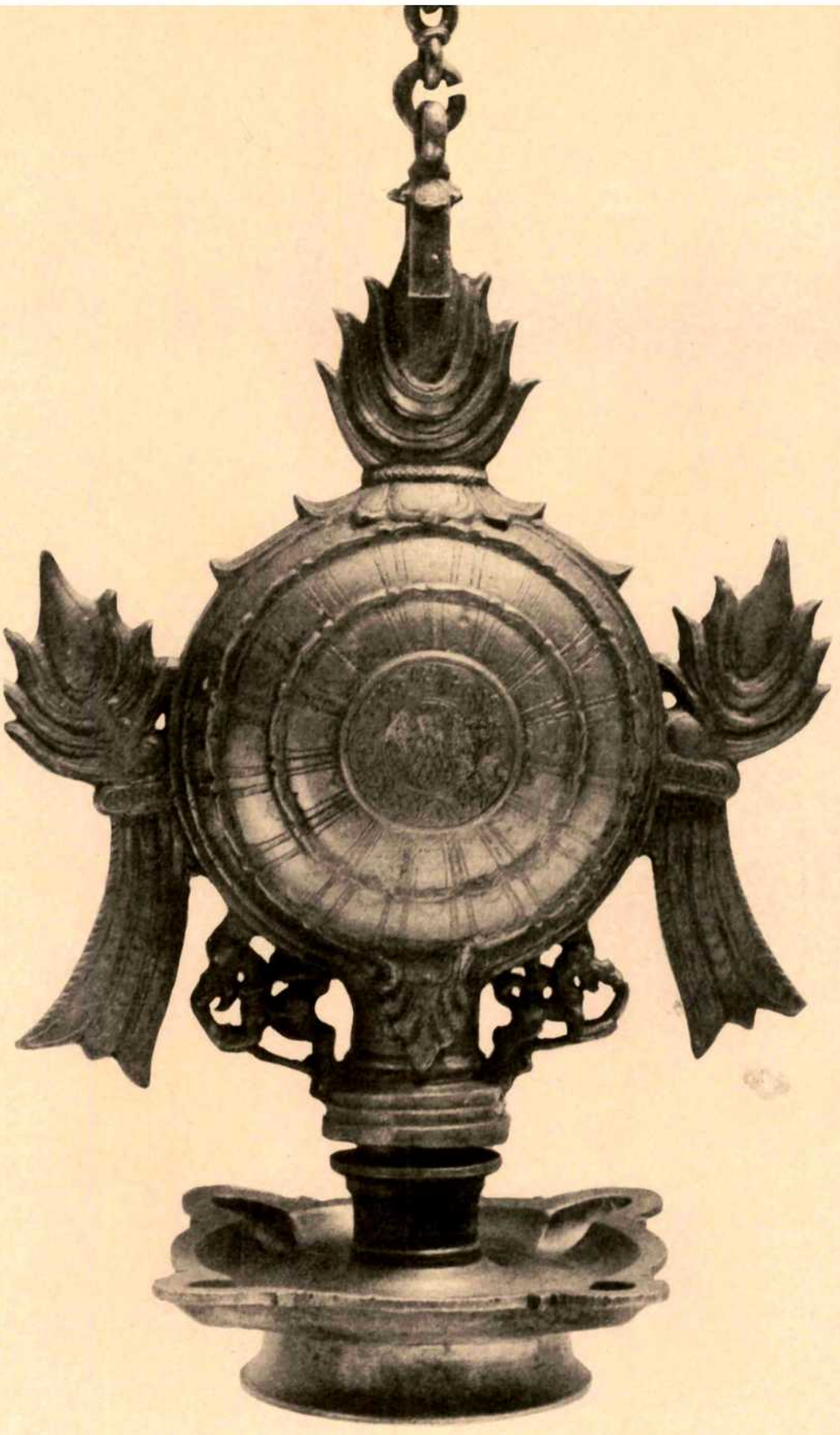

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Colourful Navagraha (nine planets) playing cards from Maharashtra

BANK OF MAHARASHTRA

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Tabool Fhal, an indoor game, from Karwar

Bharat Forge
BHARAT FORGE COMPANY LIMITED MUNDHWA
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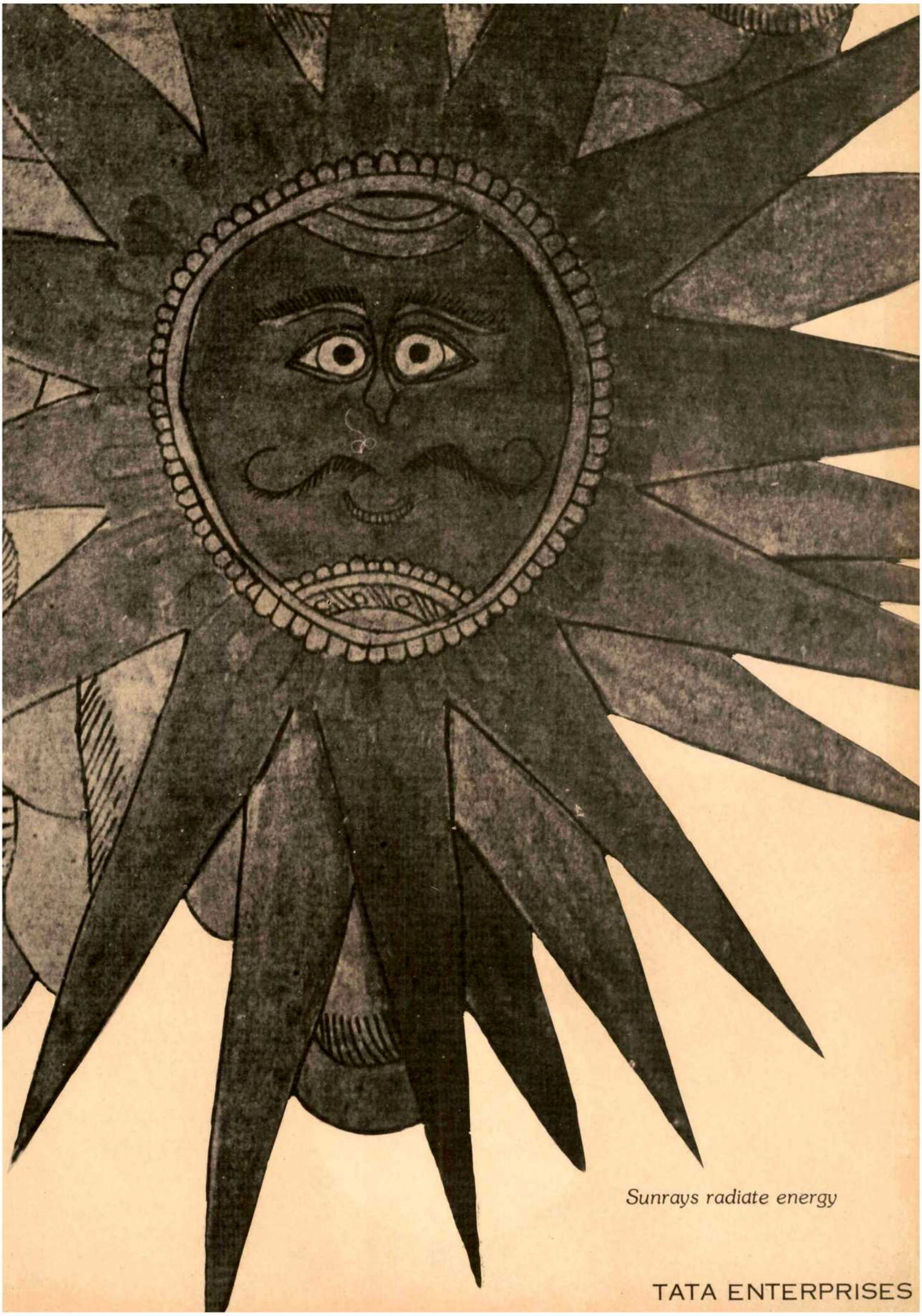


Sunrays radiate energy

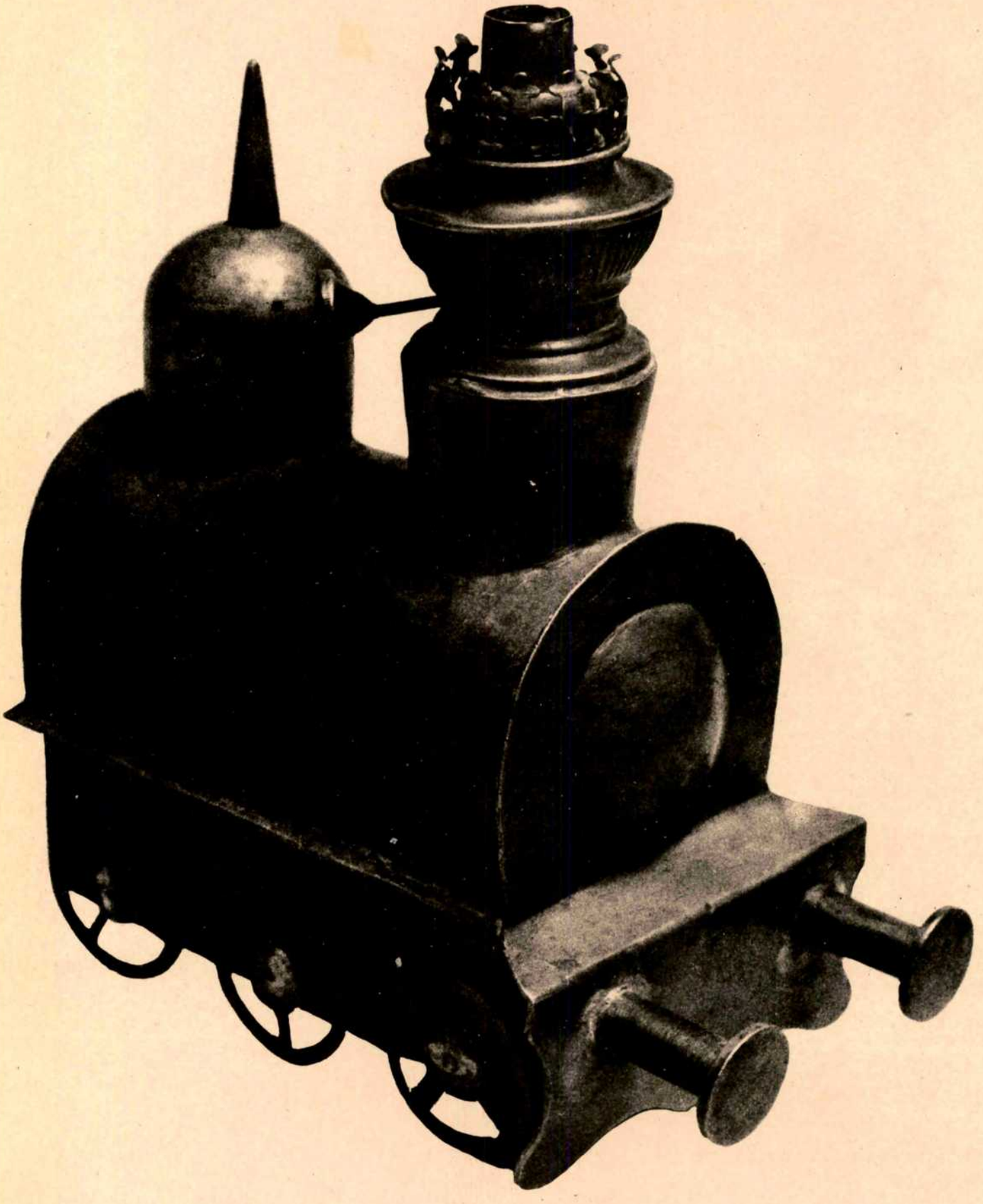
TATA ENTERPRISES

Old locks
guarded wealth
in the house

BANK OF INDIA

Hanuman (Monkey God) announcing Rama's victory

bemi a great movement
BHARAT EARTH MOVERS LIMITED



The first railway engine turn into lamp

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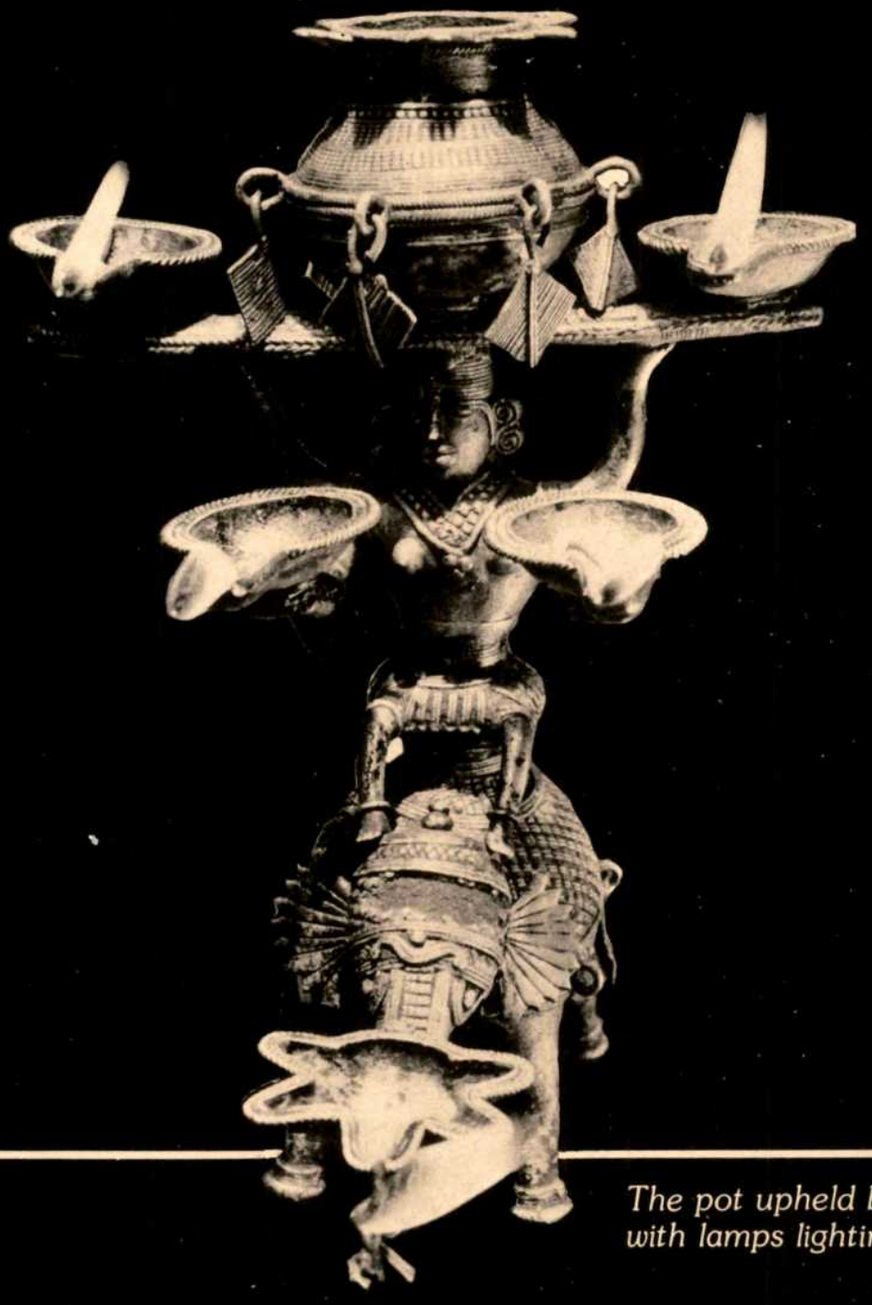

The pot upheld by an Elephant rider with lamps lighting his way.

Wanson (INDIA)

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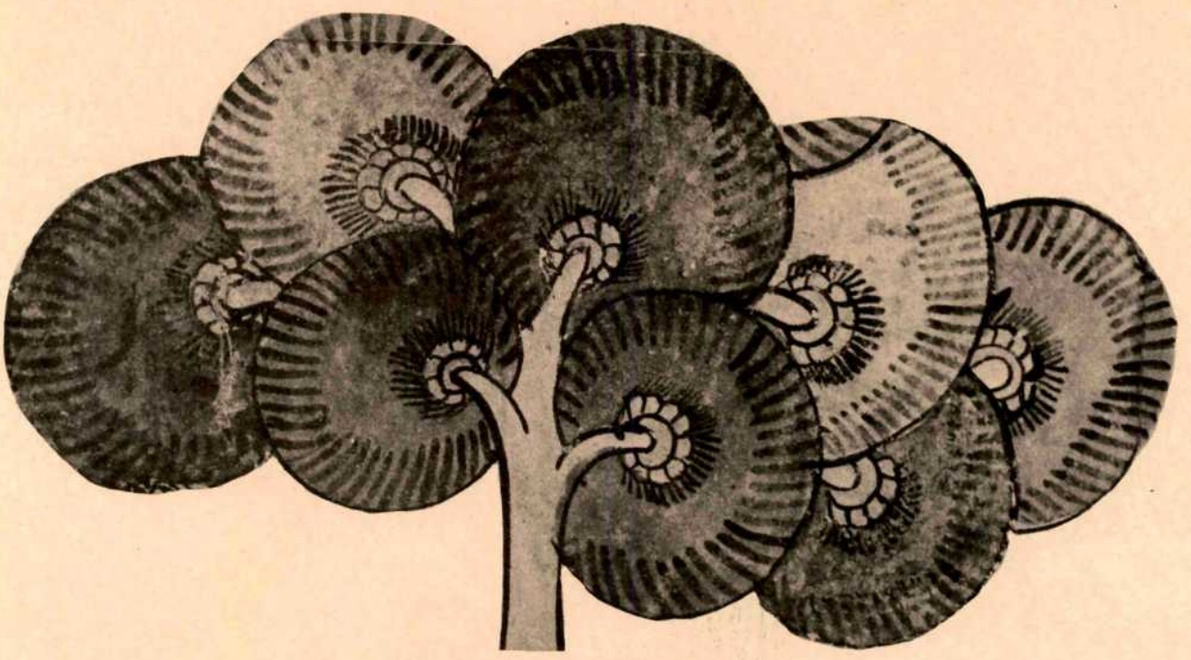

Detail of a blossoming tree

TATA FINLAY

The Palanquin preceded all other transport

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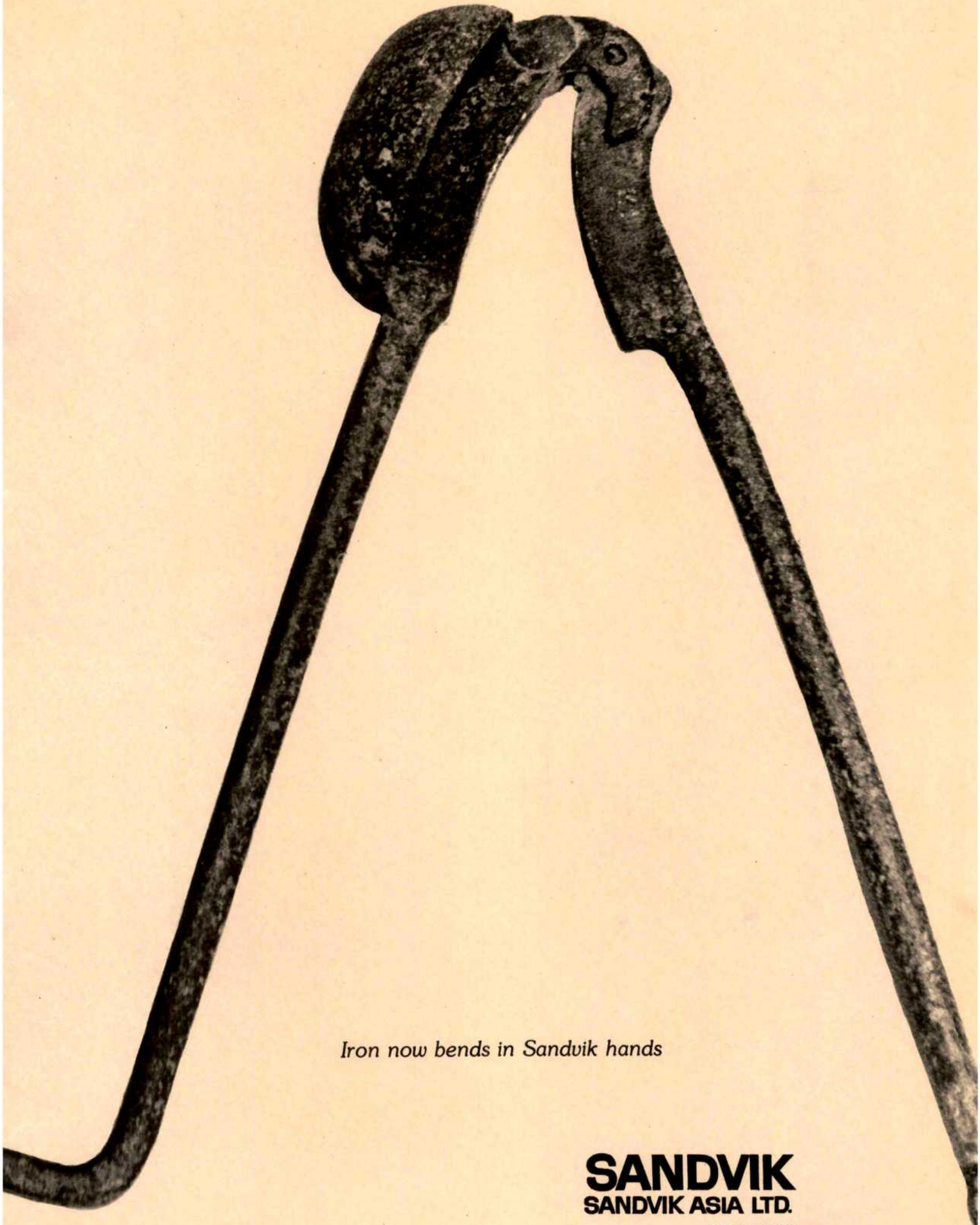

Iron now bends in Sandvik hands

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SANDVIK ASIA LTD.

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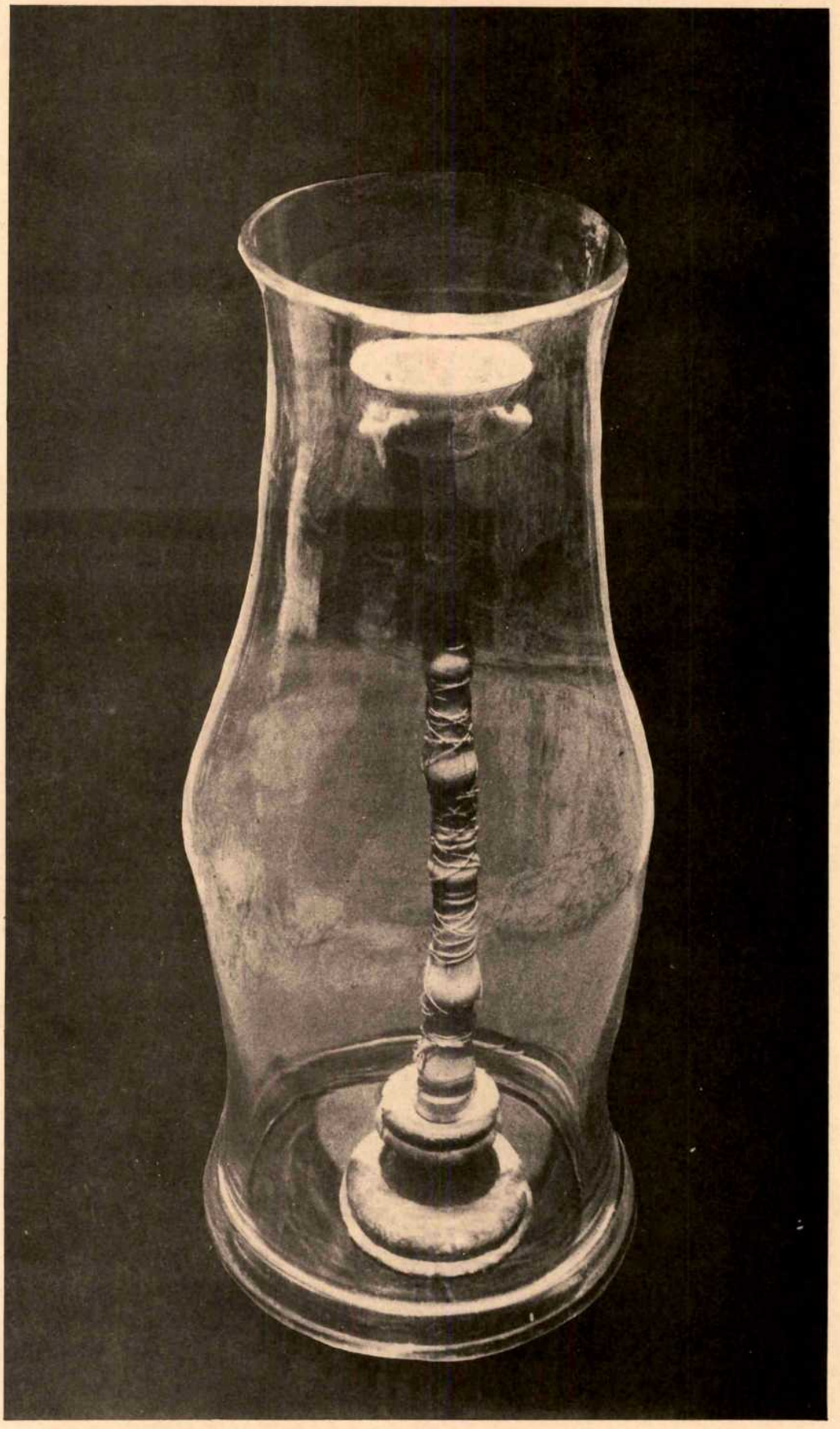

Alchemists tested medicines in lamps,
today we have laboratories

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The Peshwas patronised carpets
A court scene from a Maratha painting

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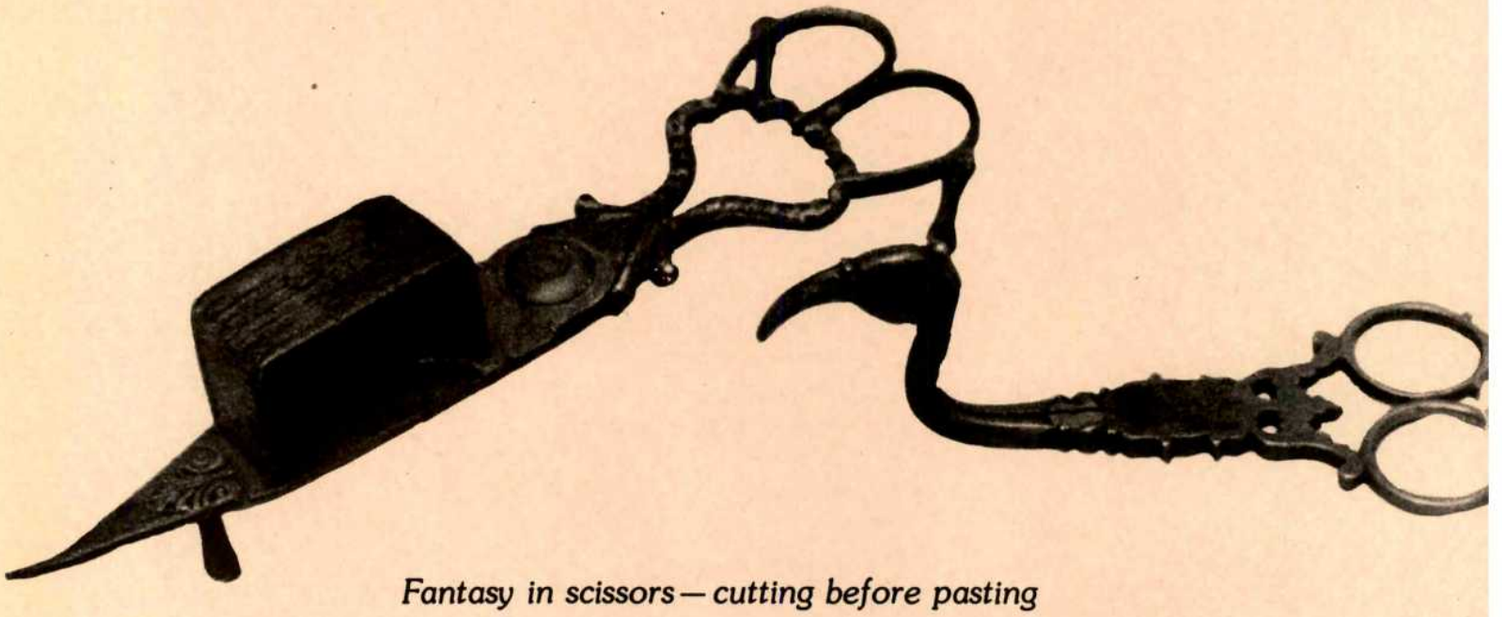

Fantasy in scissors — cutting before pasting

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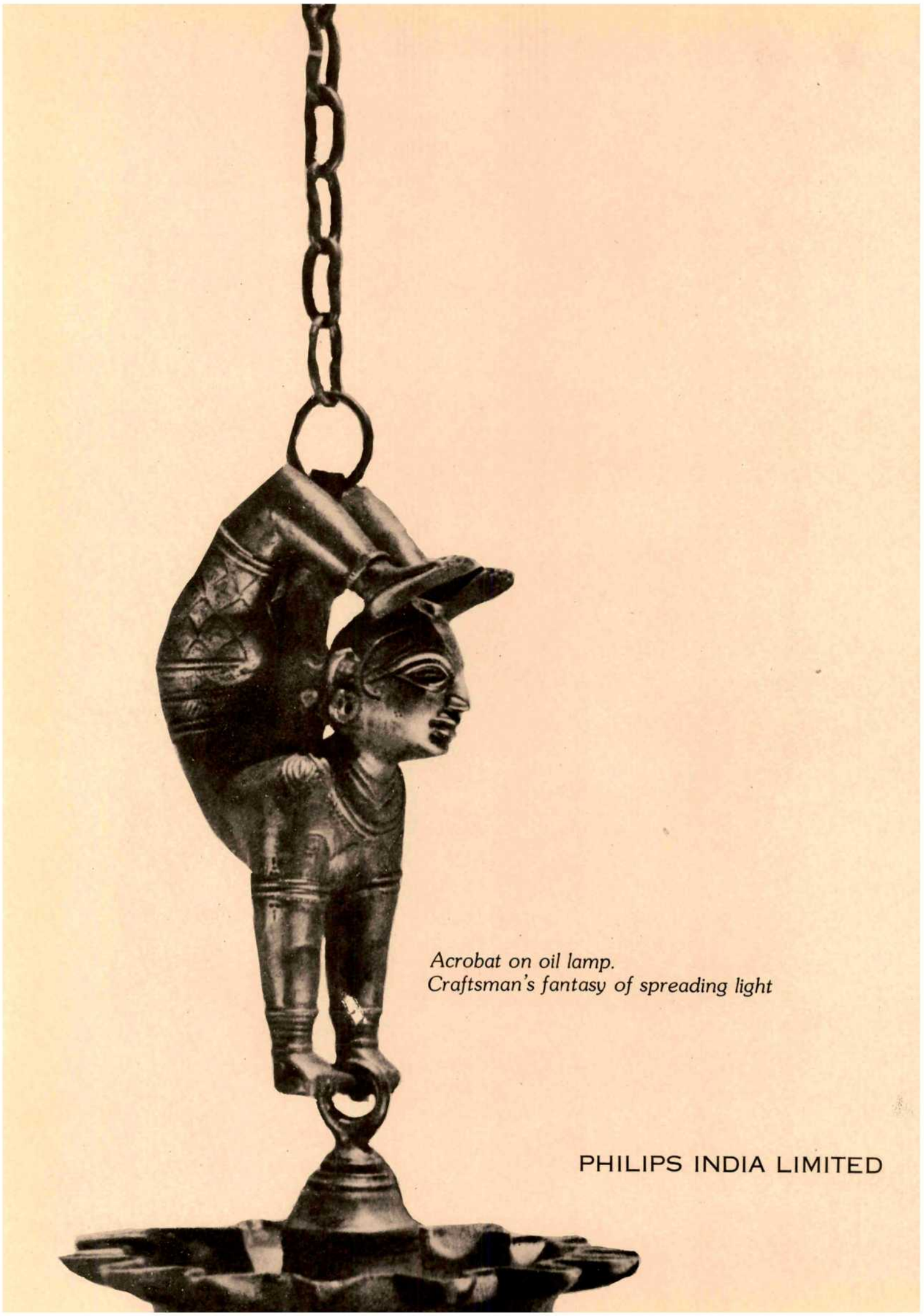
Sita adorned, awaits rescue

Lakmè
LIMITED

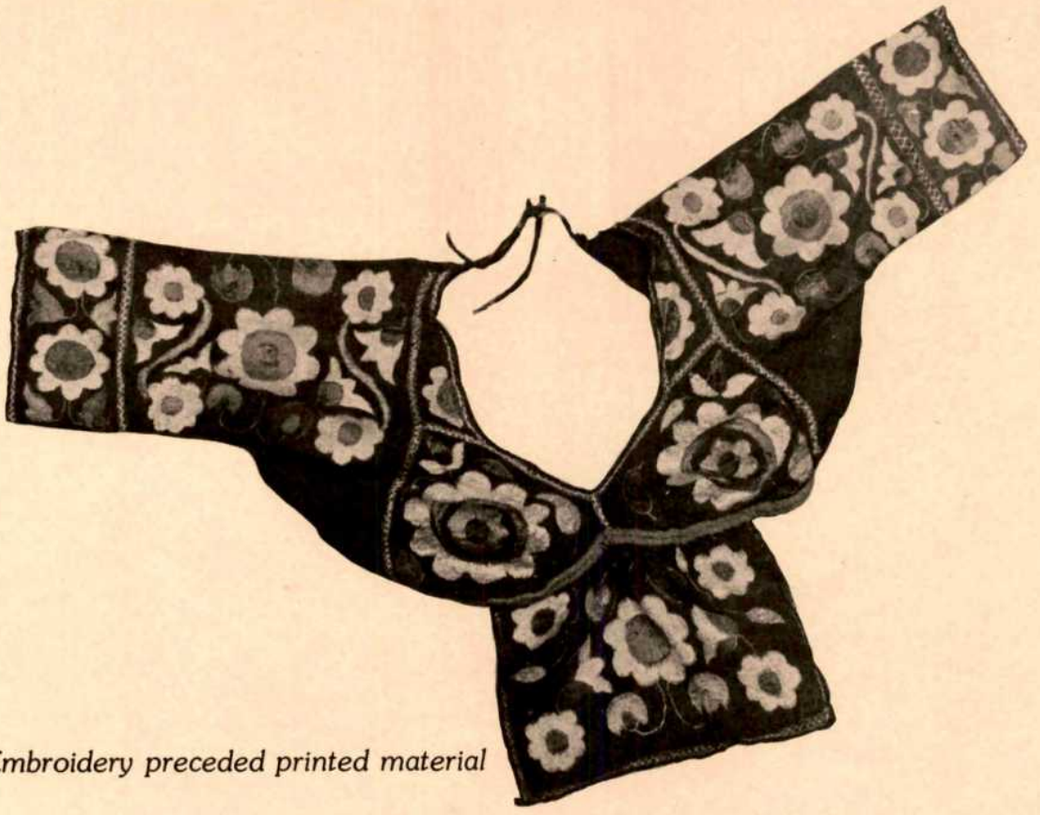


Acrobat on oil lamp.
Craftsman's fantasy of spreading light

PHILIPS INDIA LIMITED

Ink has always been a source of writing and printing
A brass ink pot with the lid

TIMES OF INDIA



Embroidery preceded printed material

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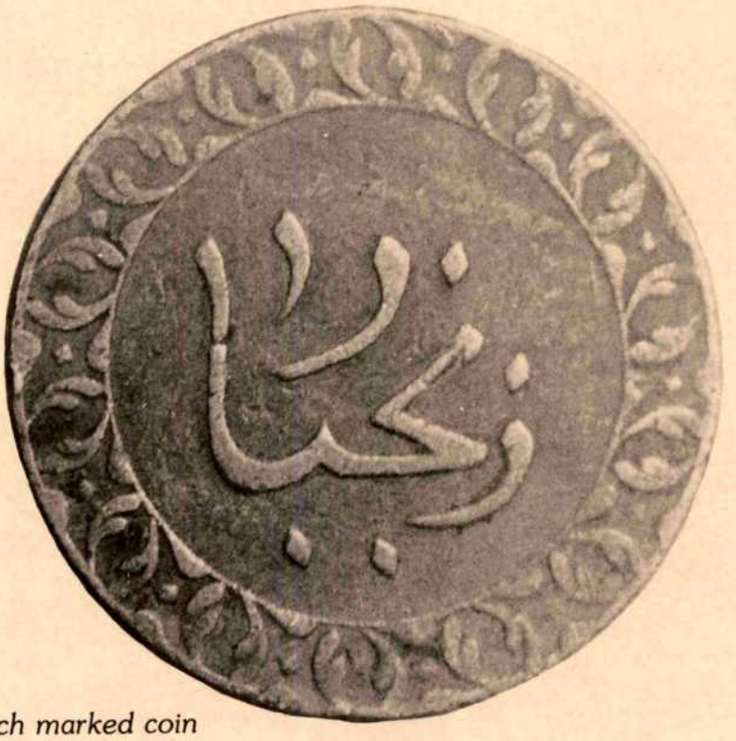
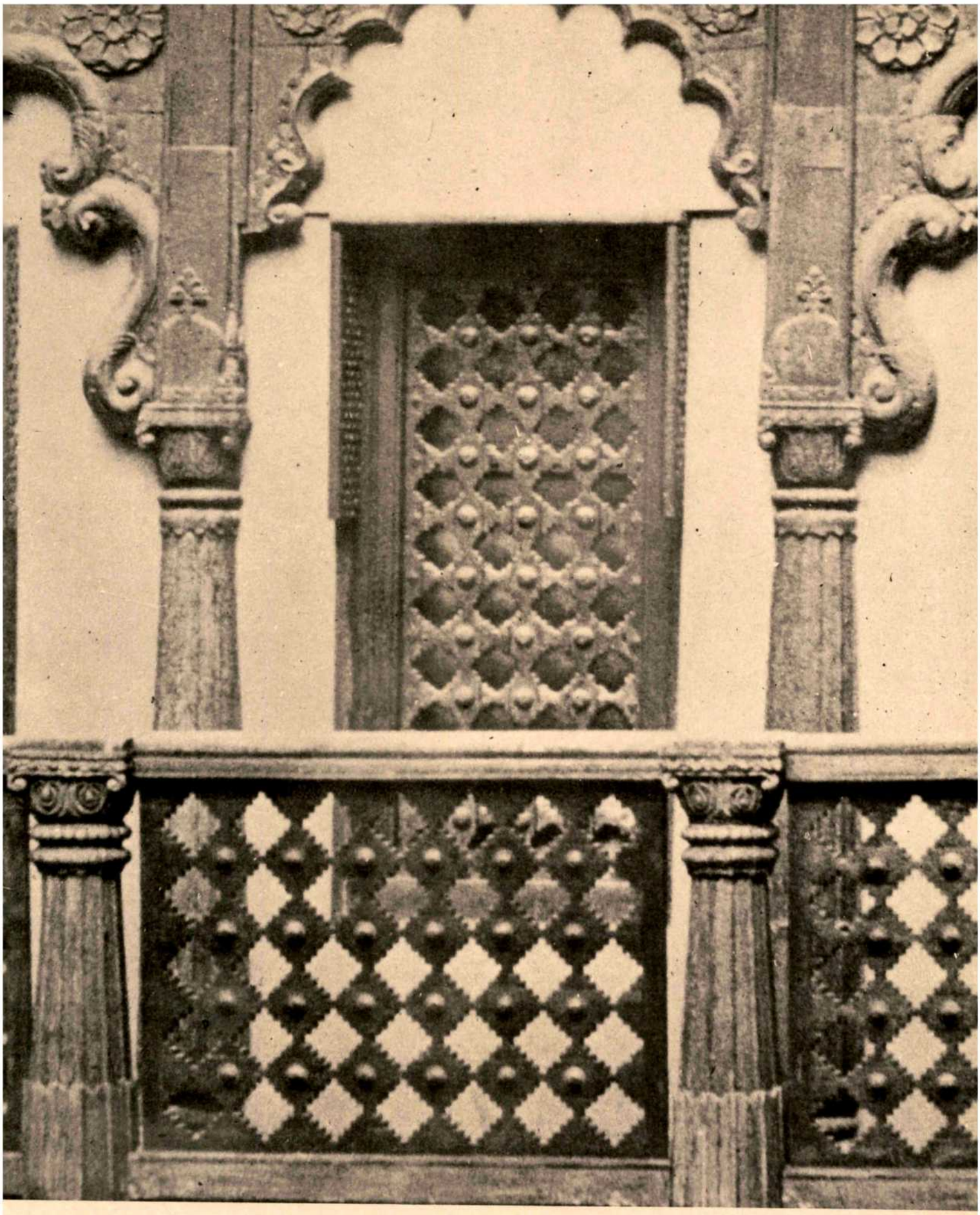


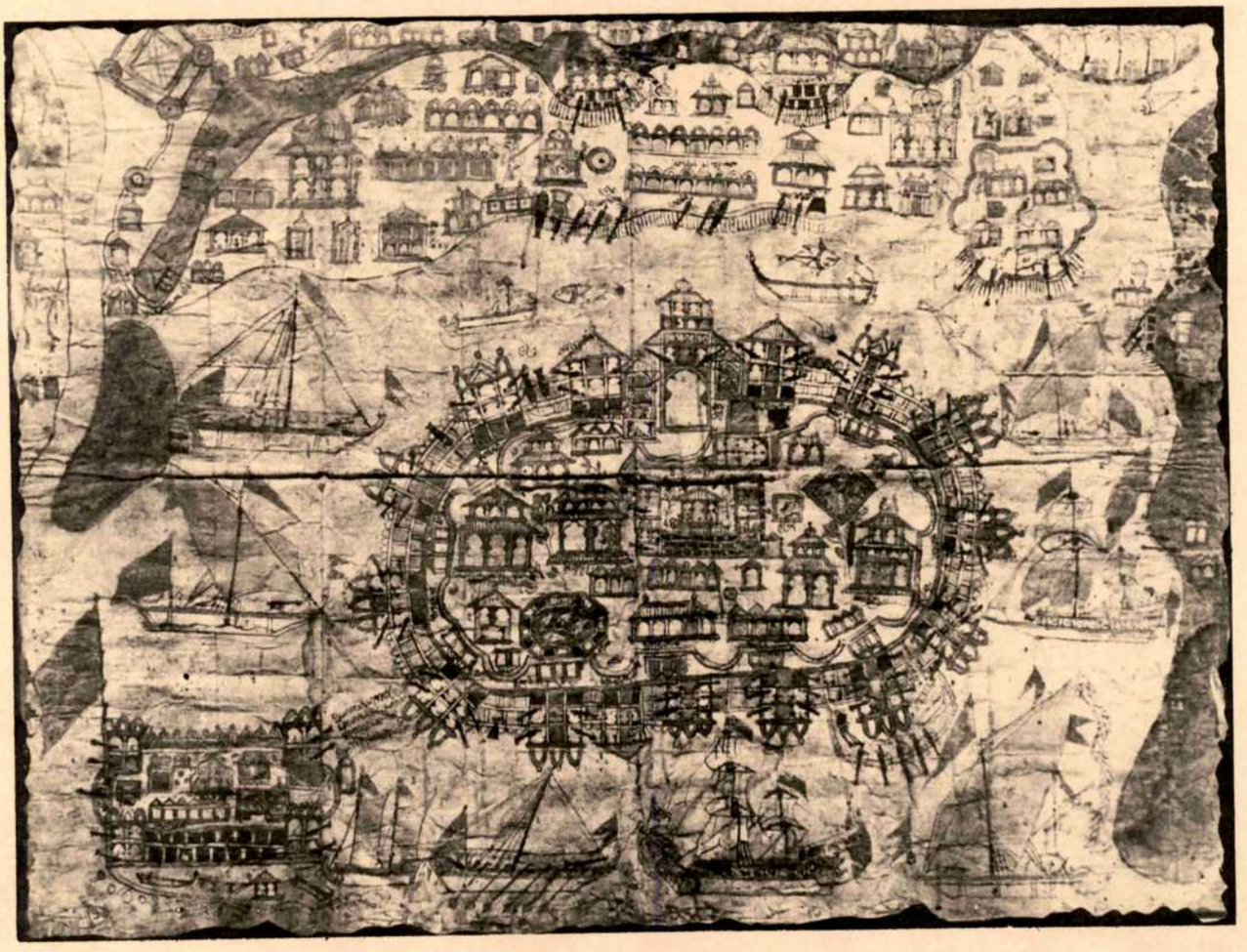
Punch marked coin

BRADMA OF INDIA LTD.



Traditional wooden pillars with symmetrical arches and jalis

RAJENDRA VILAS PALACE HOTEL, BANGALORE



The blue print of Janjira Fort

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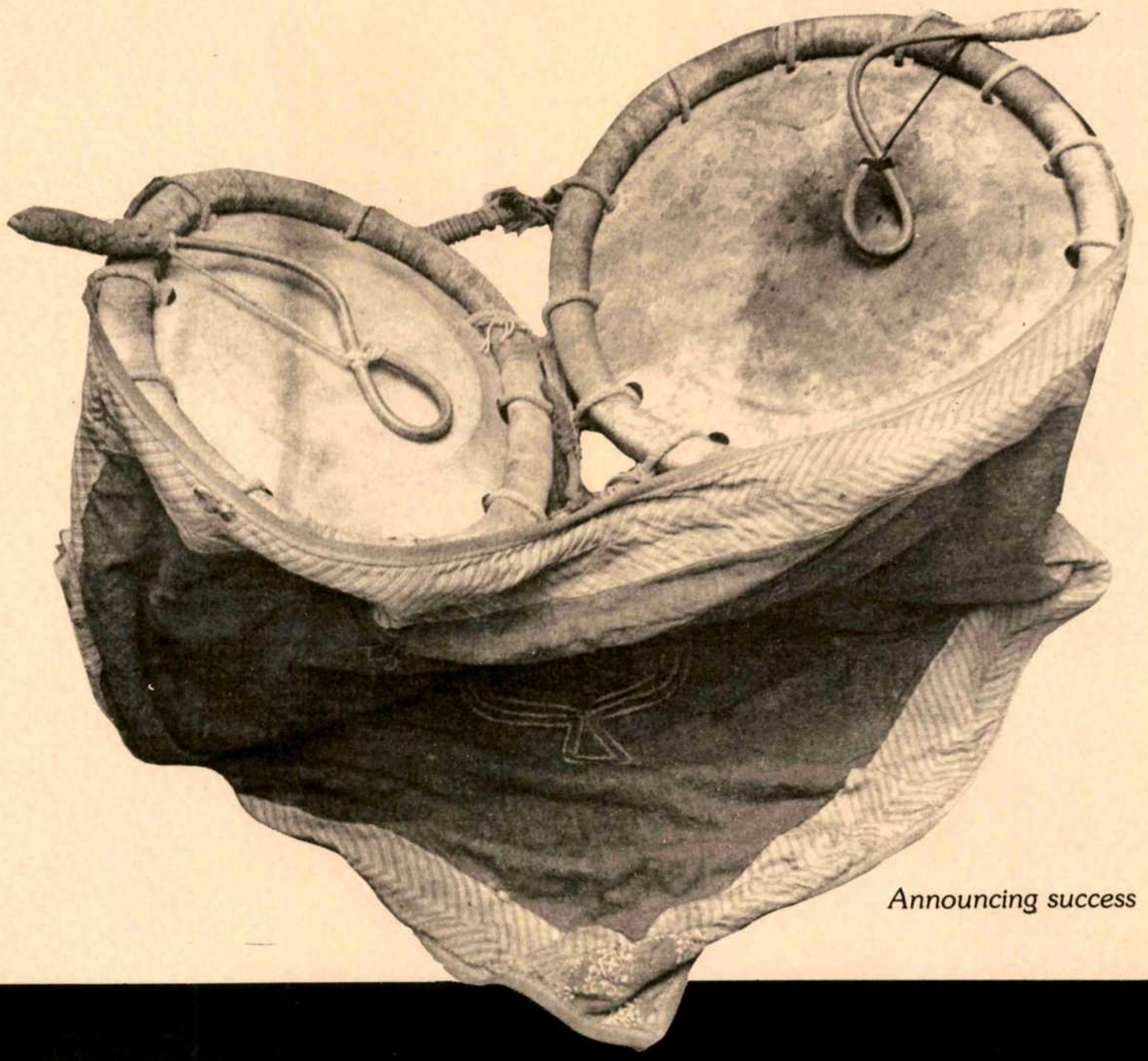

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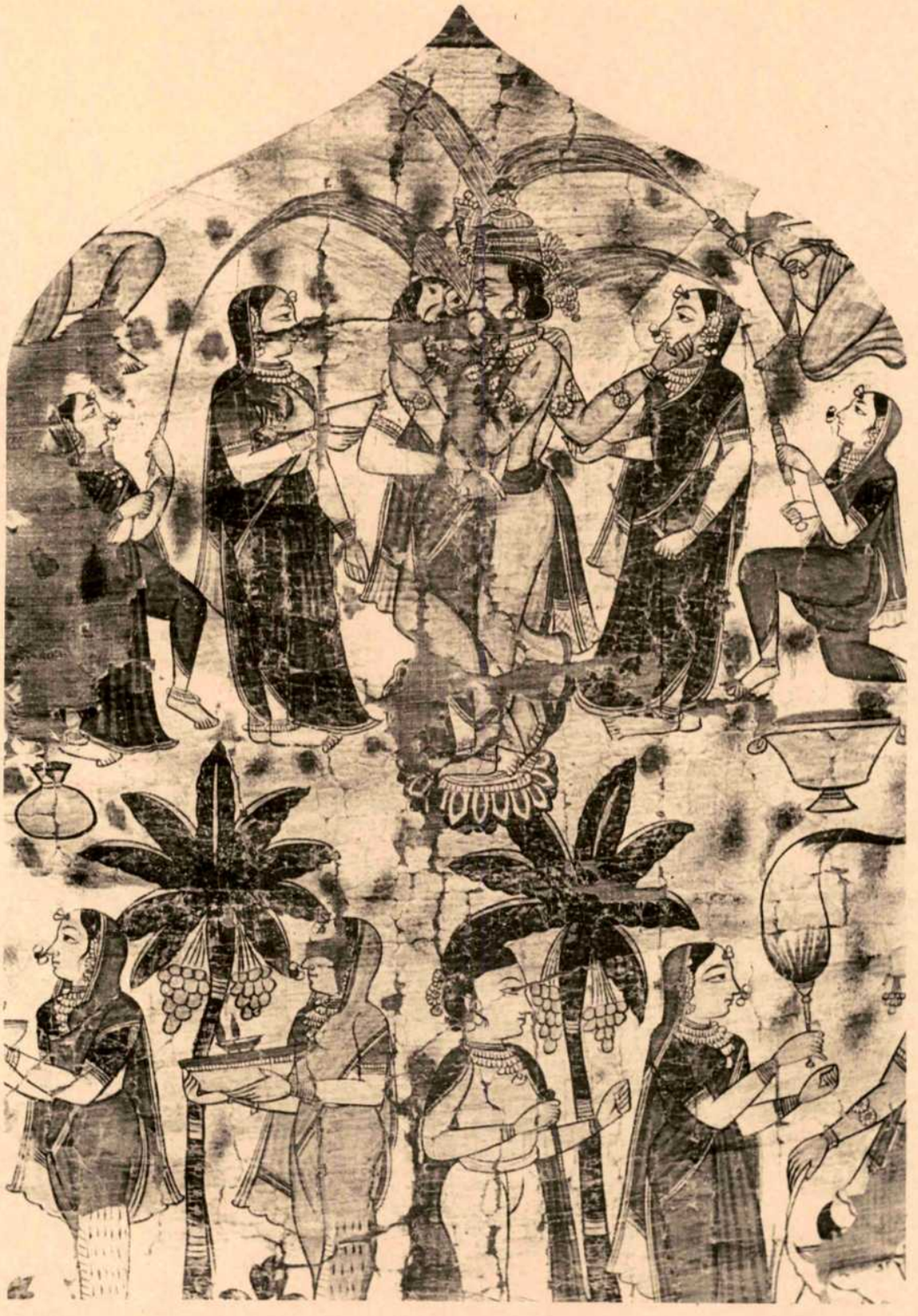

Chaitra Gauri Pata showing splashes of colour on a holi day.

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Churning the butter
A vajri from Maharashtra

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The written word becomes precise in print
A sage is preaching what he is practising, detail from a Chitrakathi painting

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The Sun's chariot preceded all vehicles
The Navagraha (nine planets) playing card from Maharashtra, early 20th century

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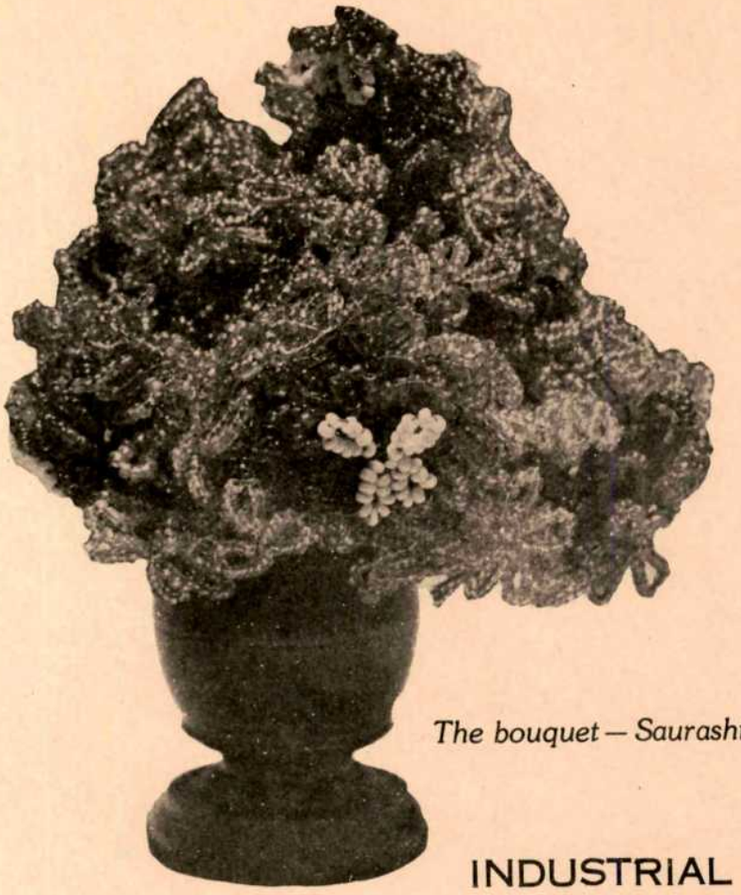

The bouquet — Saurashtra

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Parrot contemplating flight —
A brass lime container, Maharashtra

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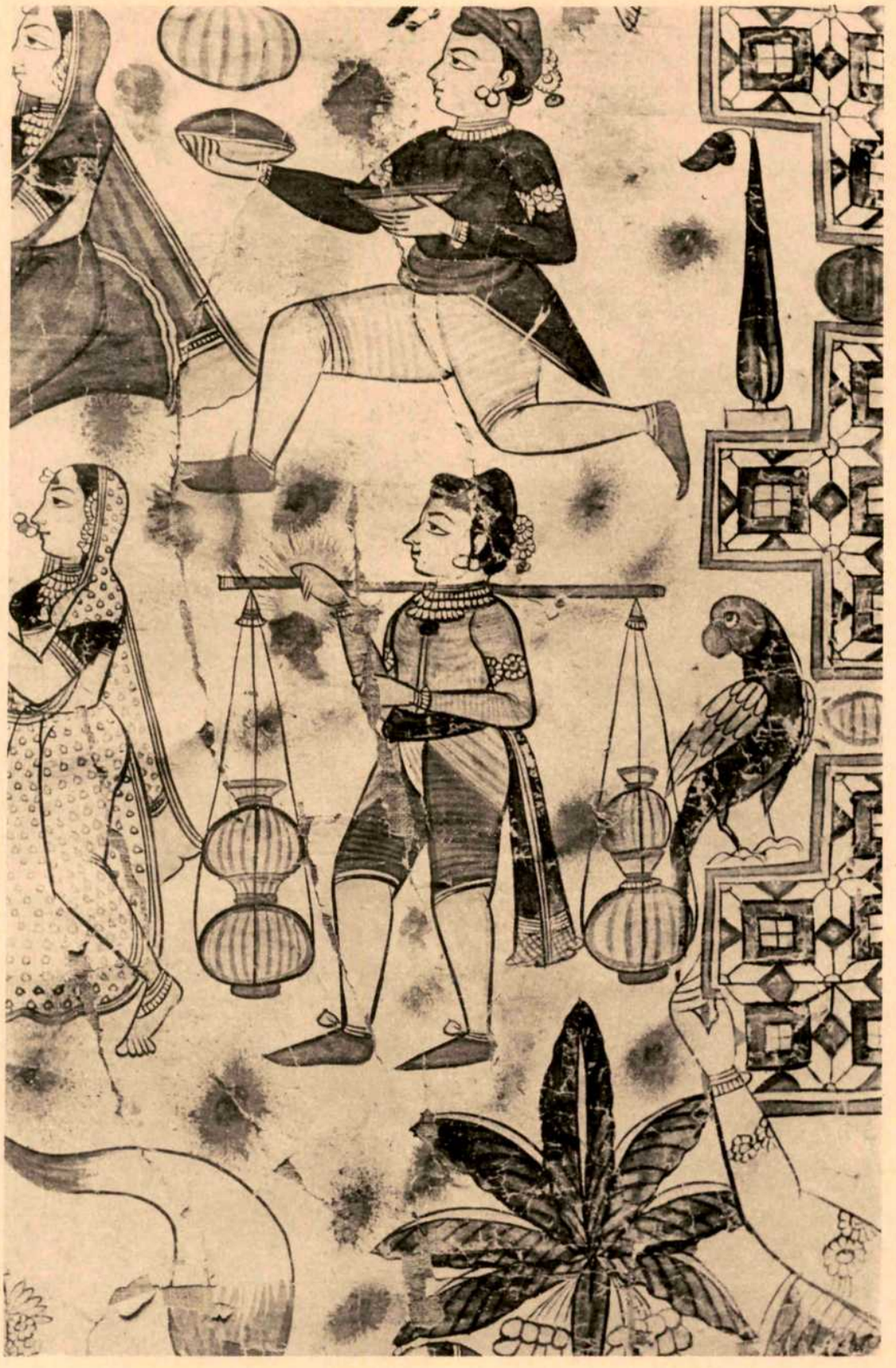
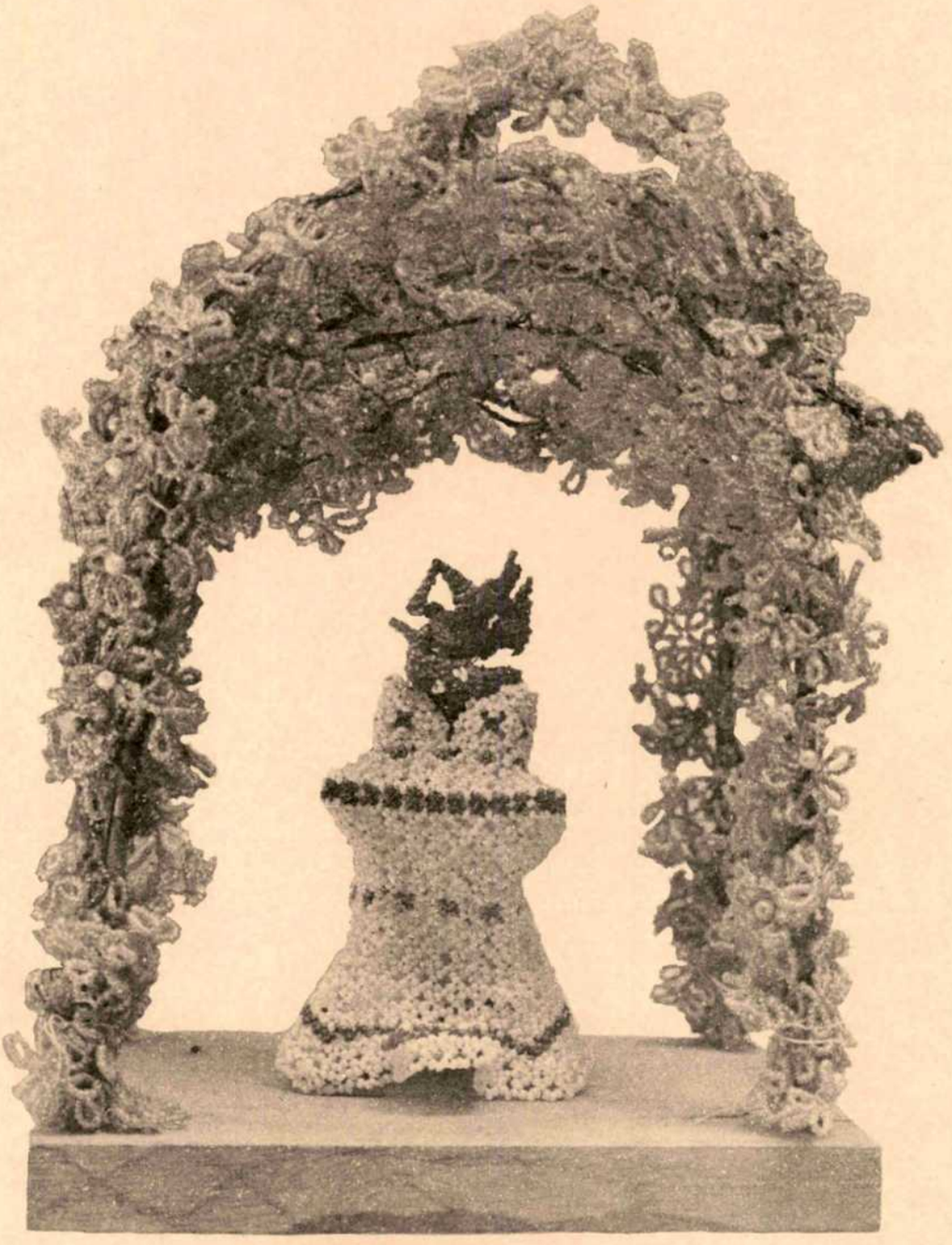


Chaitra Gauri Pata, showing medieval trader exporting ghee



Bead decoration becomes flowers when knit together

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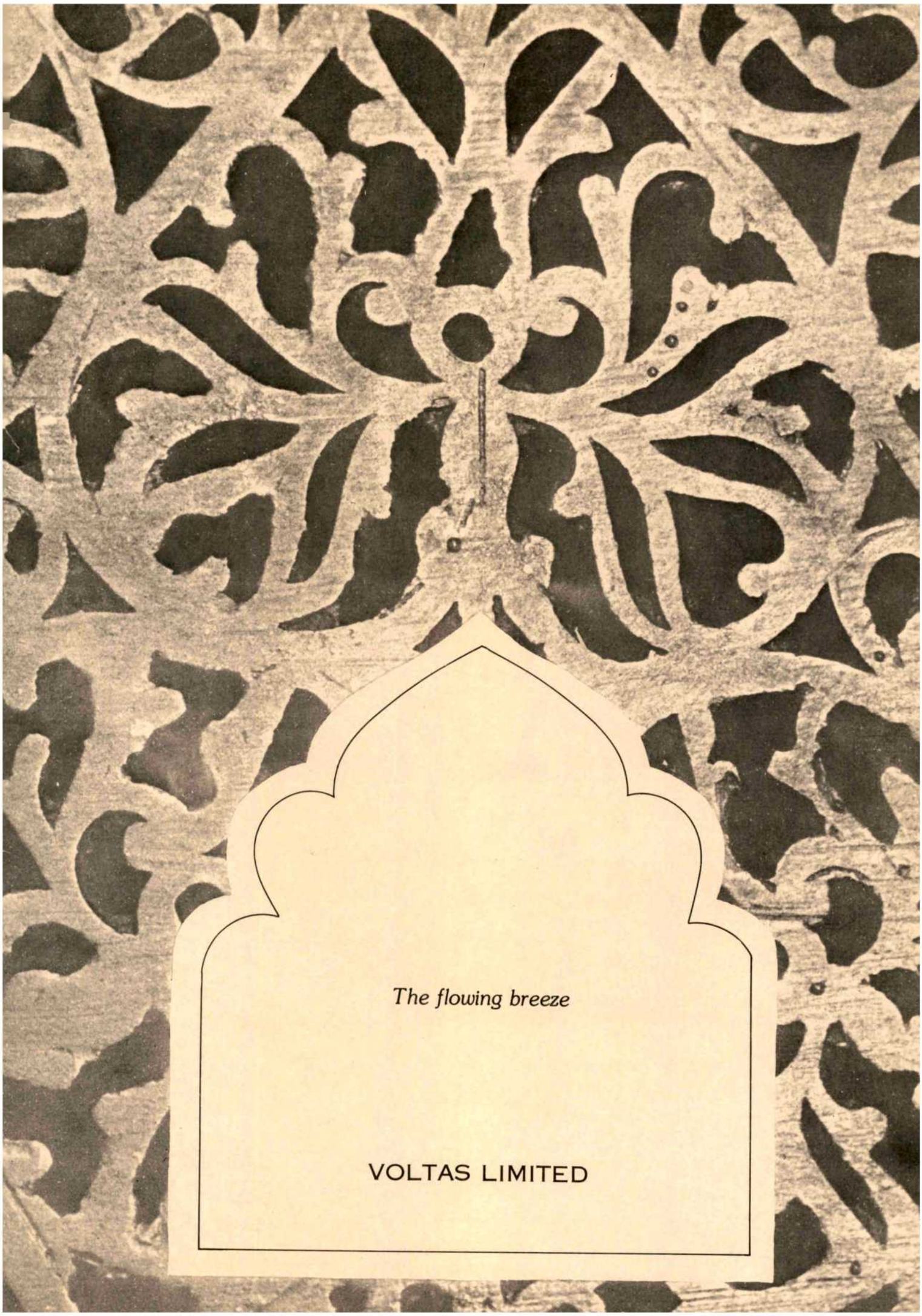
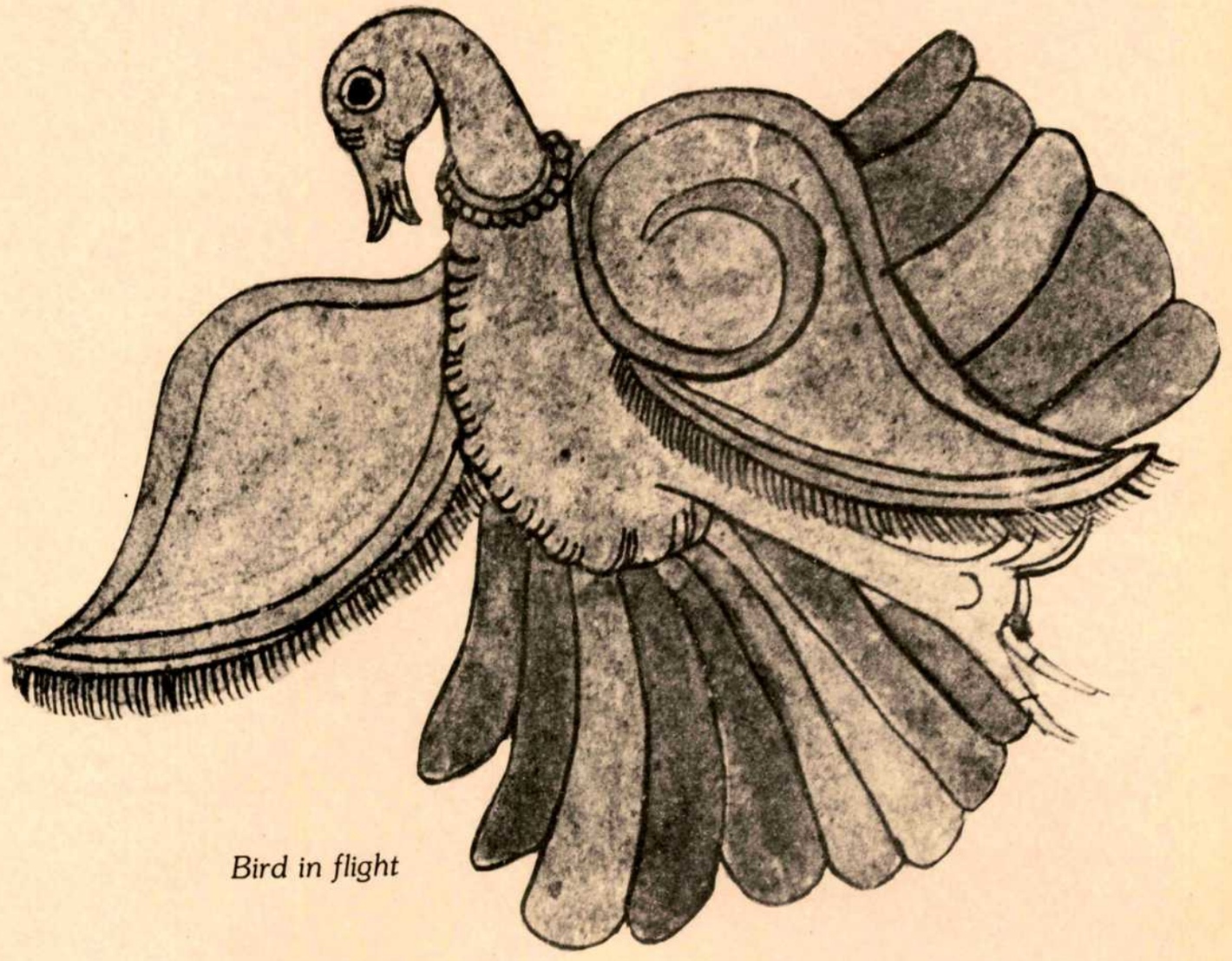

The flowing breeze
VOLTAS LIMITED

Ganesh the God of plenty

Central Bank of India

The Bank that moves out to people and places



Bird in flight

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Dai-Ichi transforms material

DAI-ICHI KARKARIA
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Aiming the target, detail from a Chitrakathi painting Ramayana set, Maharashtra

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THE TAJ MAHAL INTERCONTINENTAL BOMBAY

Sringara Rasa
Detail from a Chitrakathi painting of Chaupat players

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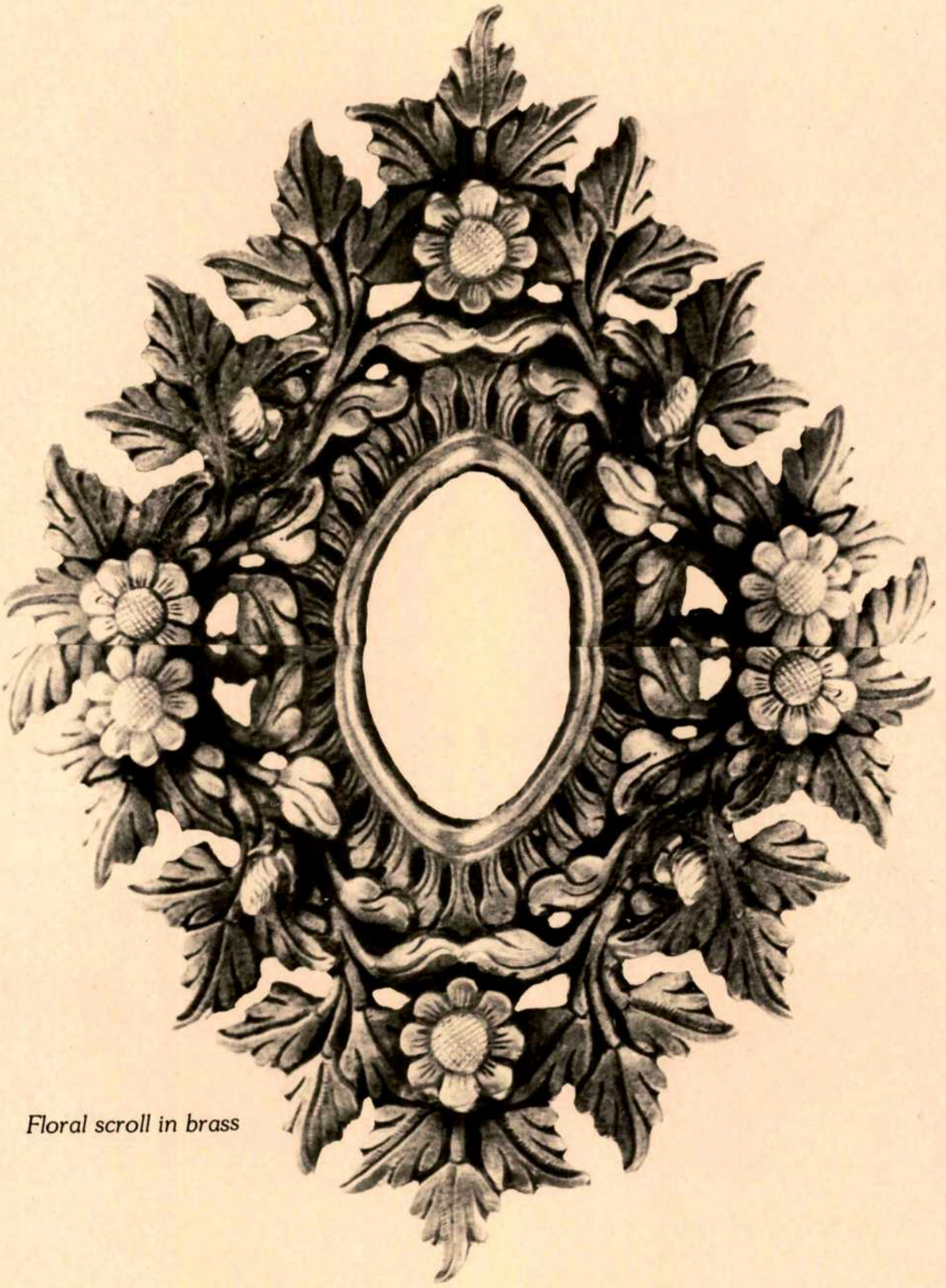
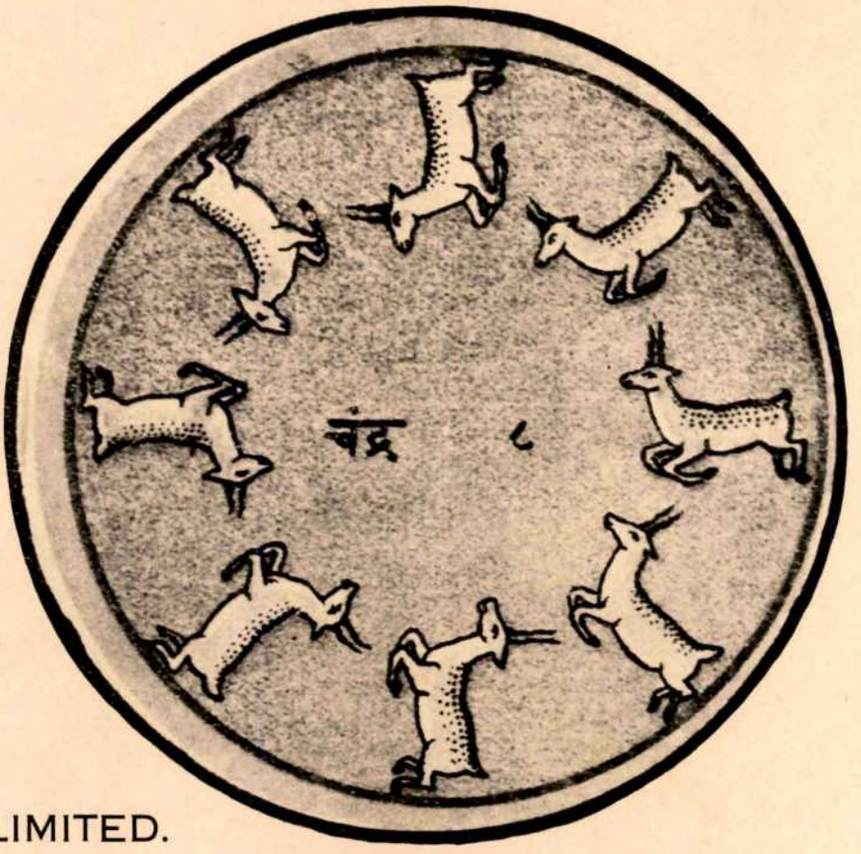


Floral scroll in brass

SERUM INSTITUTE OF INDIA, PUNE.



A Navagraha playing card from Maharashtra

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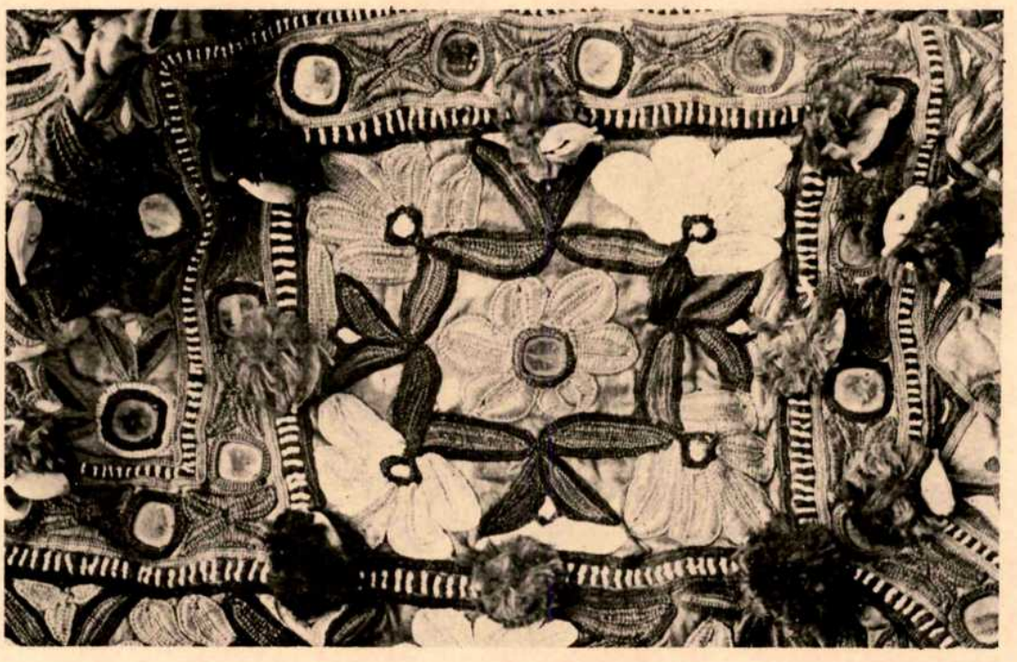

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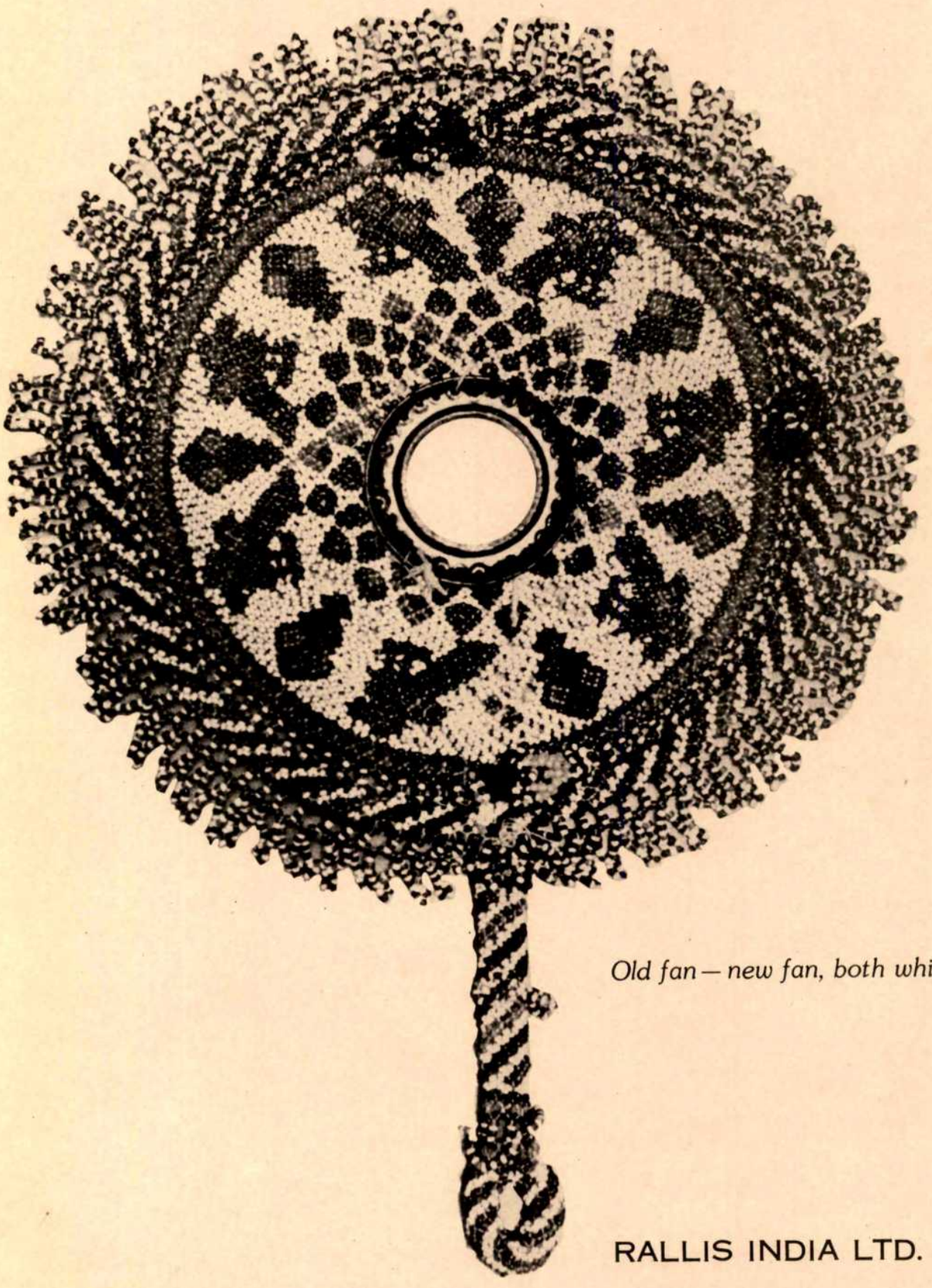
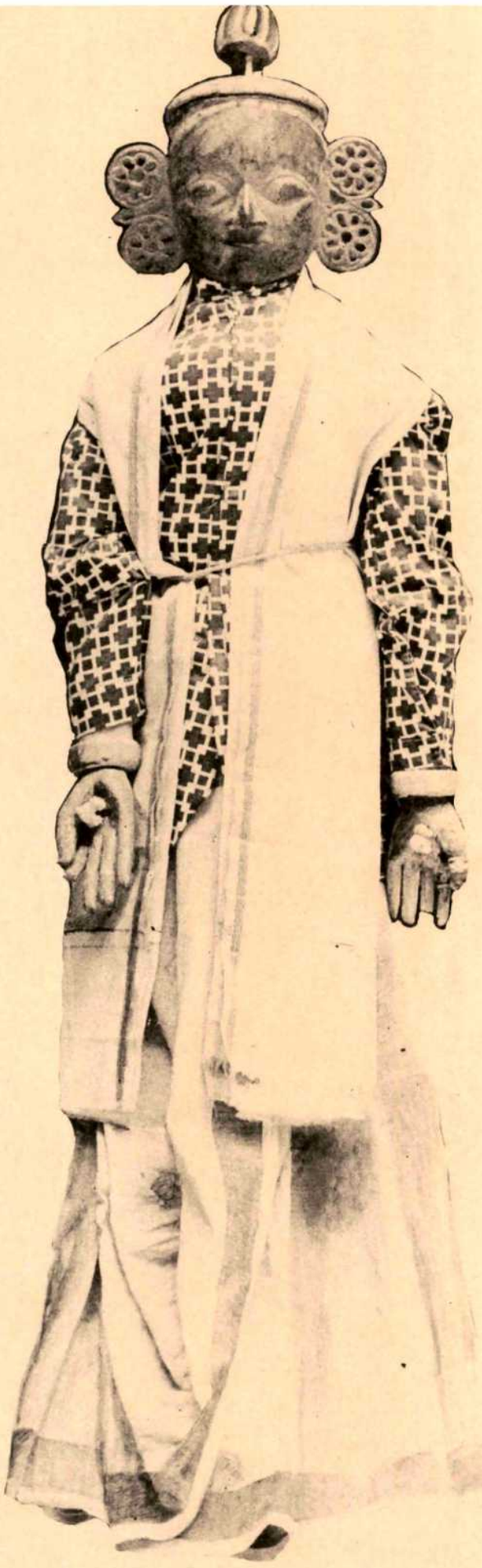
Woman in her relaxed mood

HOTEL FERNHILL IMPERIAL· OOTACAMUND



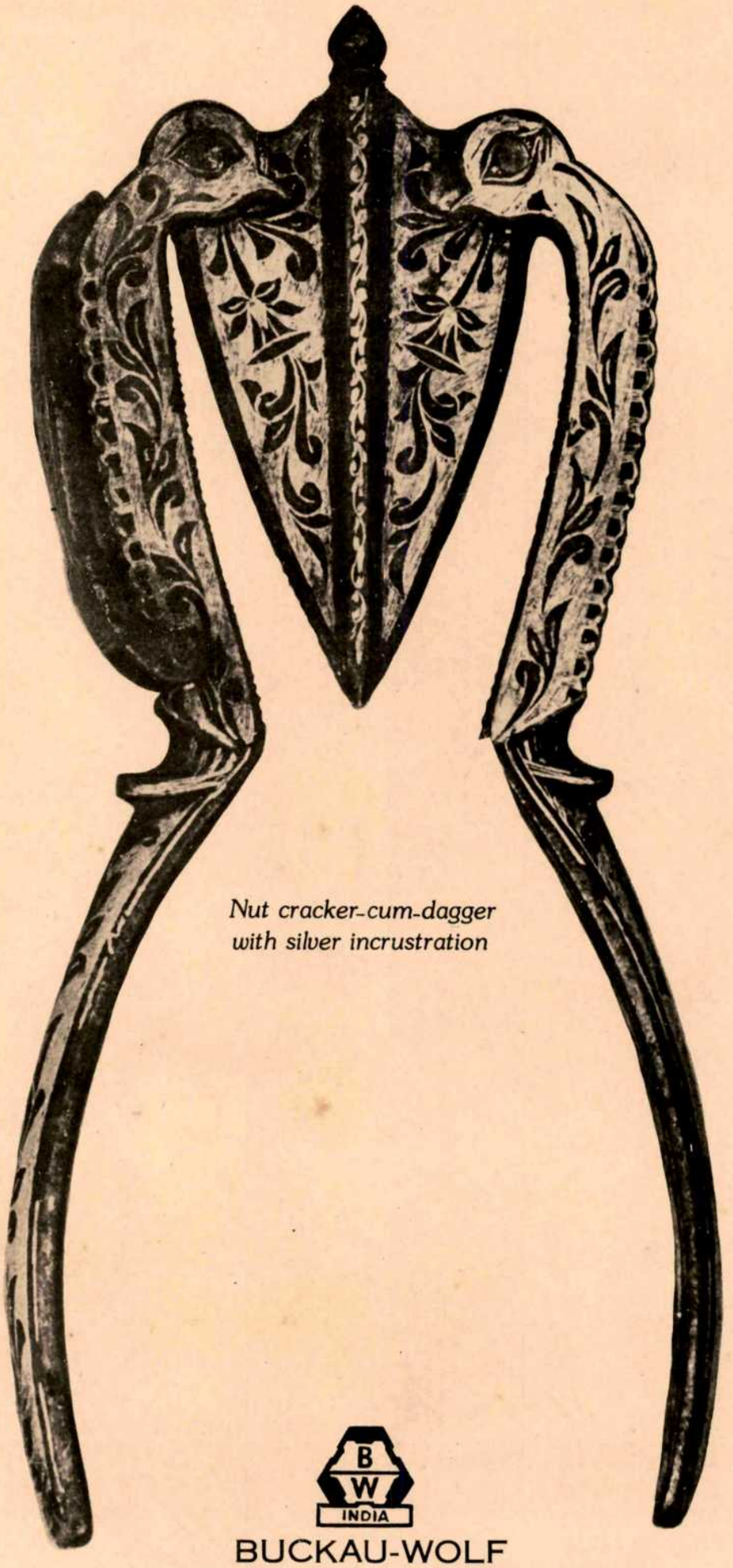
Old fan — new fan, both whisper

RALLIS INDIA LTD.



String puppet

RAJABAHADUR MOTILAL POONA MILLS, PUNE



Nut cracker-cum-dagger
with silver incrustration

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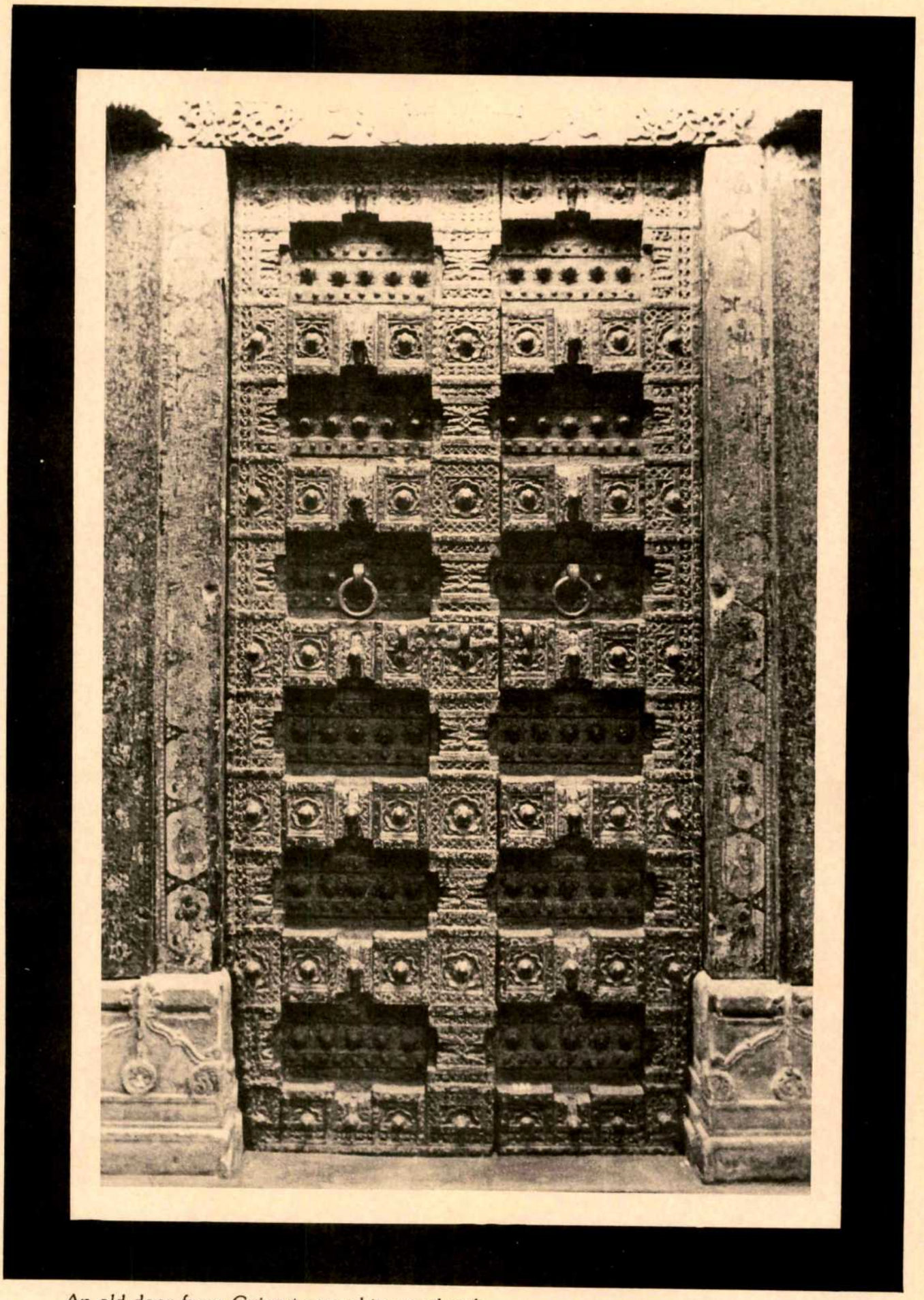

An old door from Gujarat carved in wood with painted panels on the side

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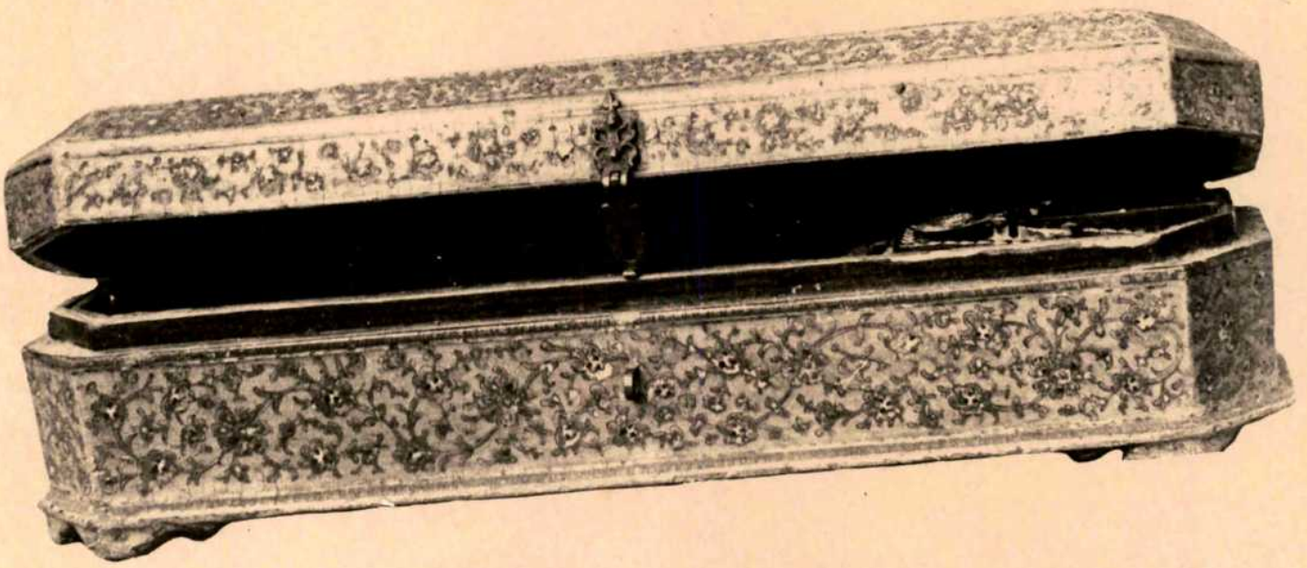

Pen and ink box in paper mâche.

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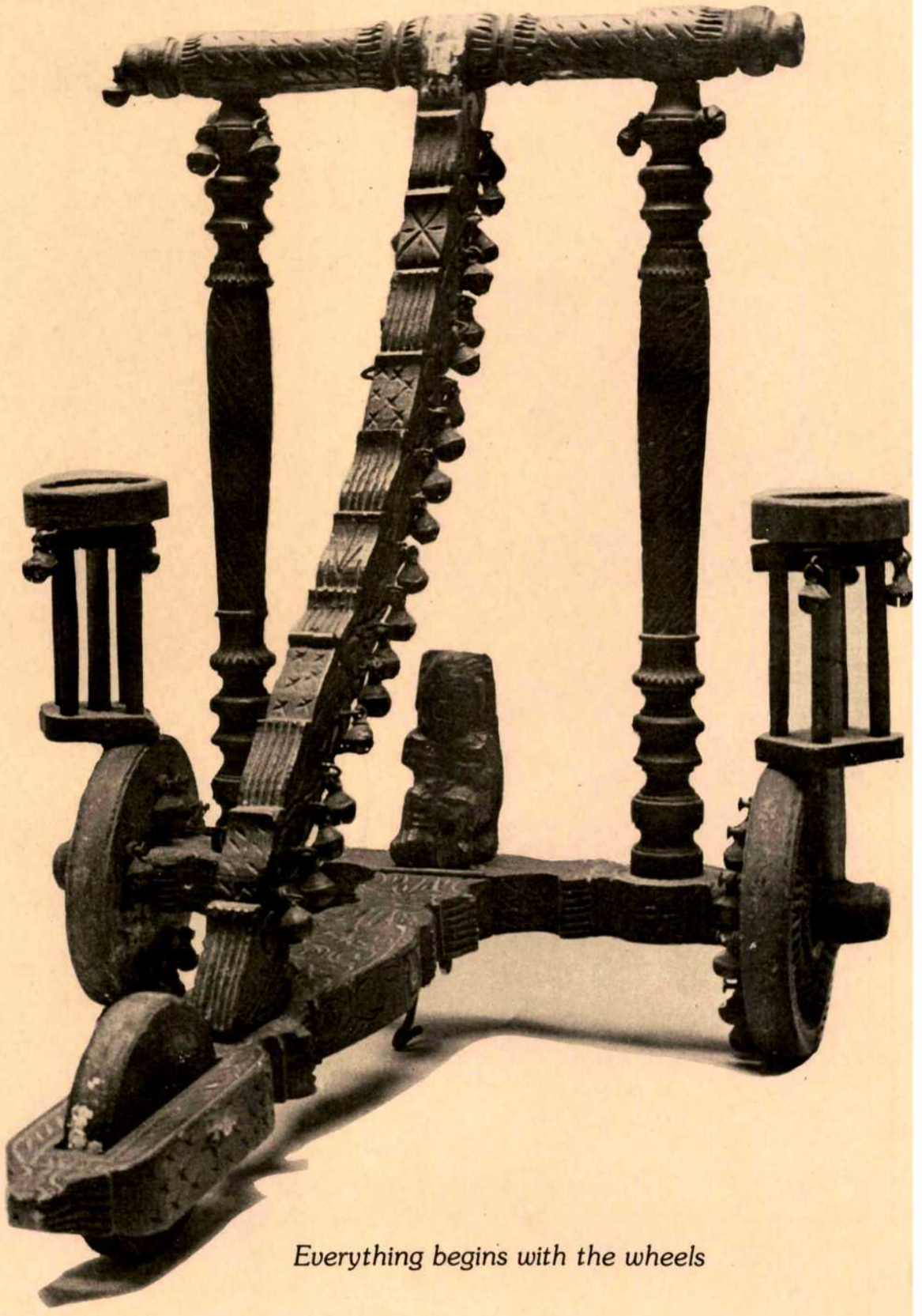

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MARG – AN ART QUARTERLY

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To rediscover the heritage of Indian and Asian art through the centuries
To celebrate the continuity of tradition in the arts and crafts, textiles, pottery and metal casting

To analyse contemporary trends in architecture, sculpture, painting and graphic design

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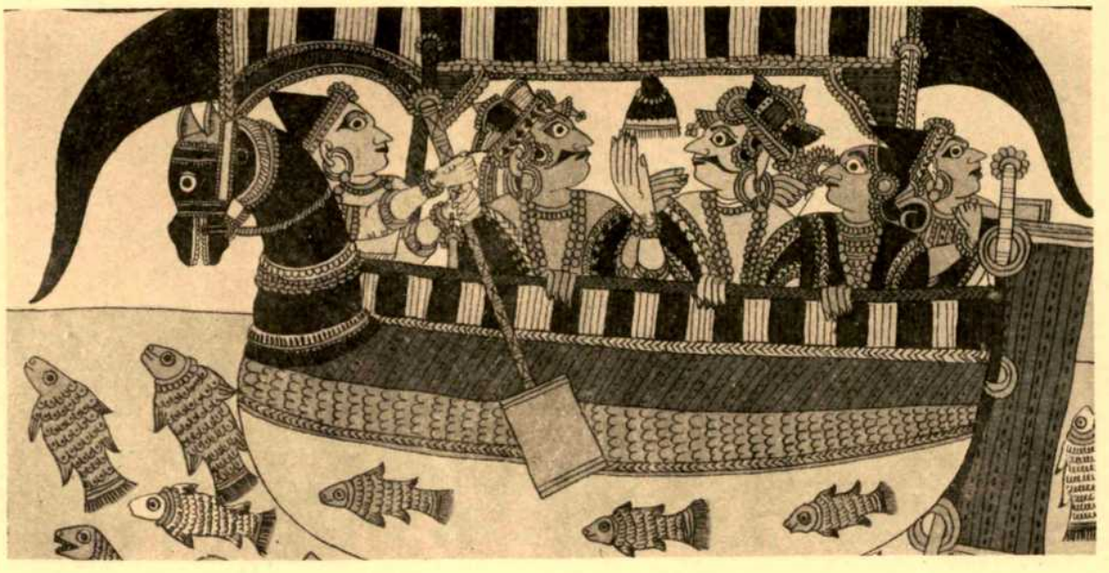

Rama, Sita and Laxman crossing the river.
Chitrakathi Printing from Maharashtra.

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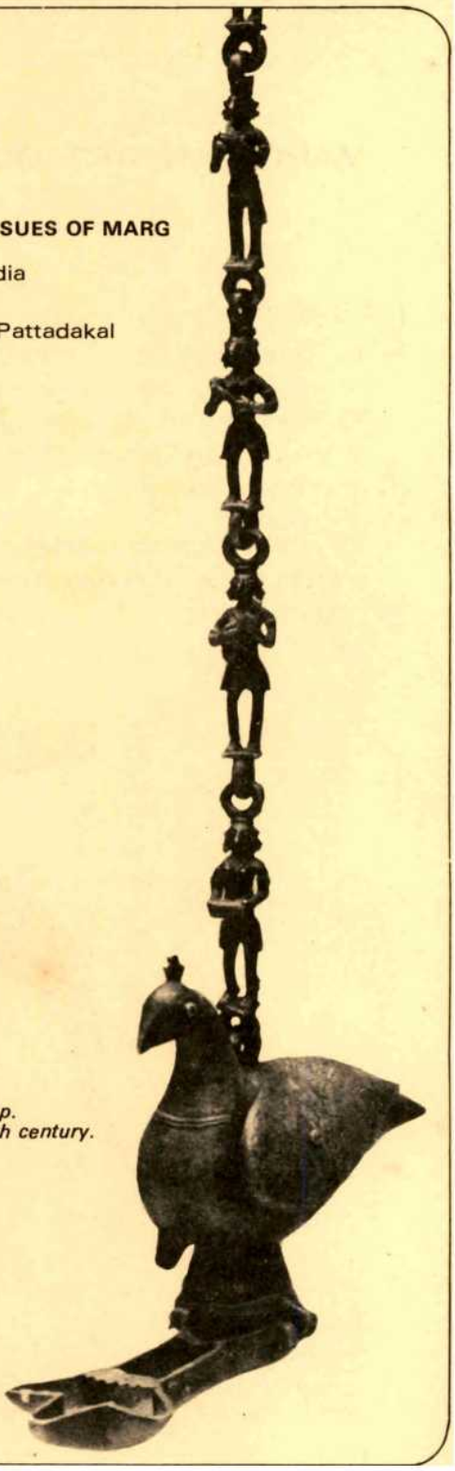
Kalamkaris of India

Chalukyan Art—
Aihole, Badami, Pattadakal



A hanging brass-lamp.
Rajasthan. Early 20th century.

Traditional terracotta oil lamp

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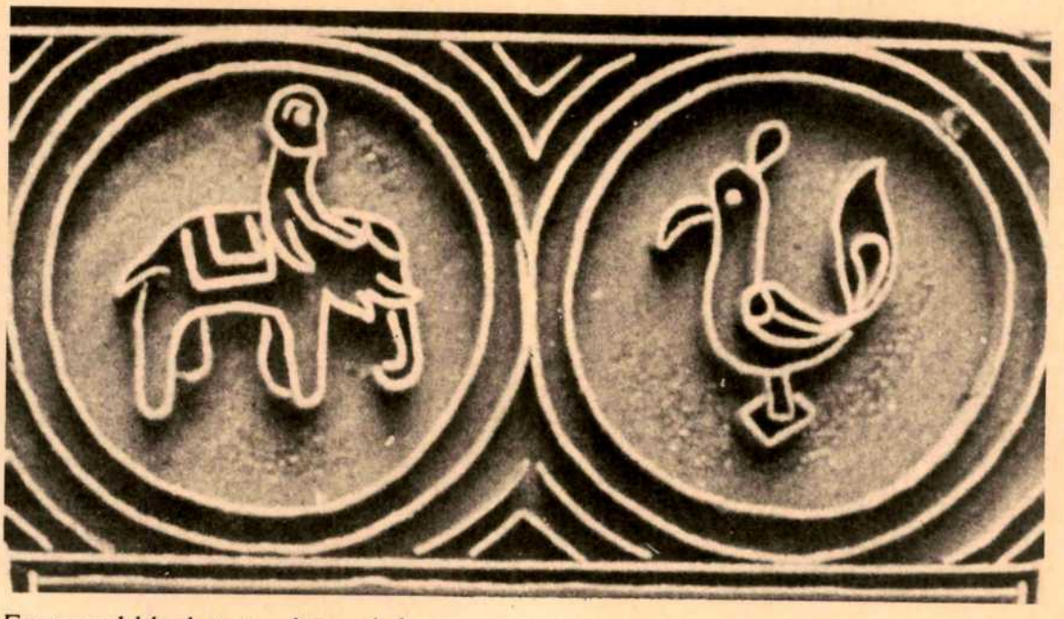
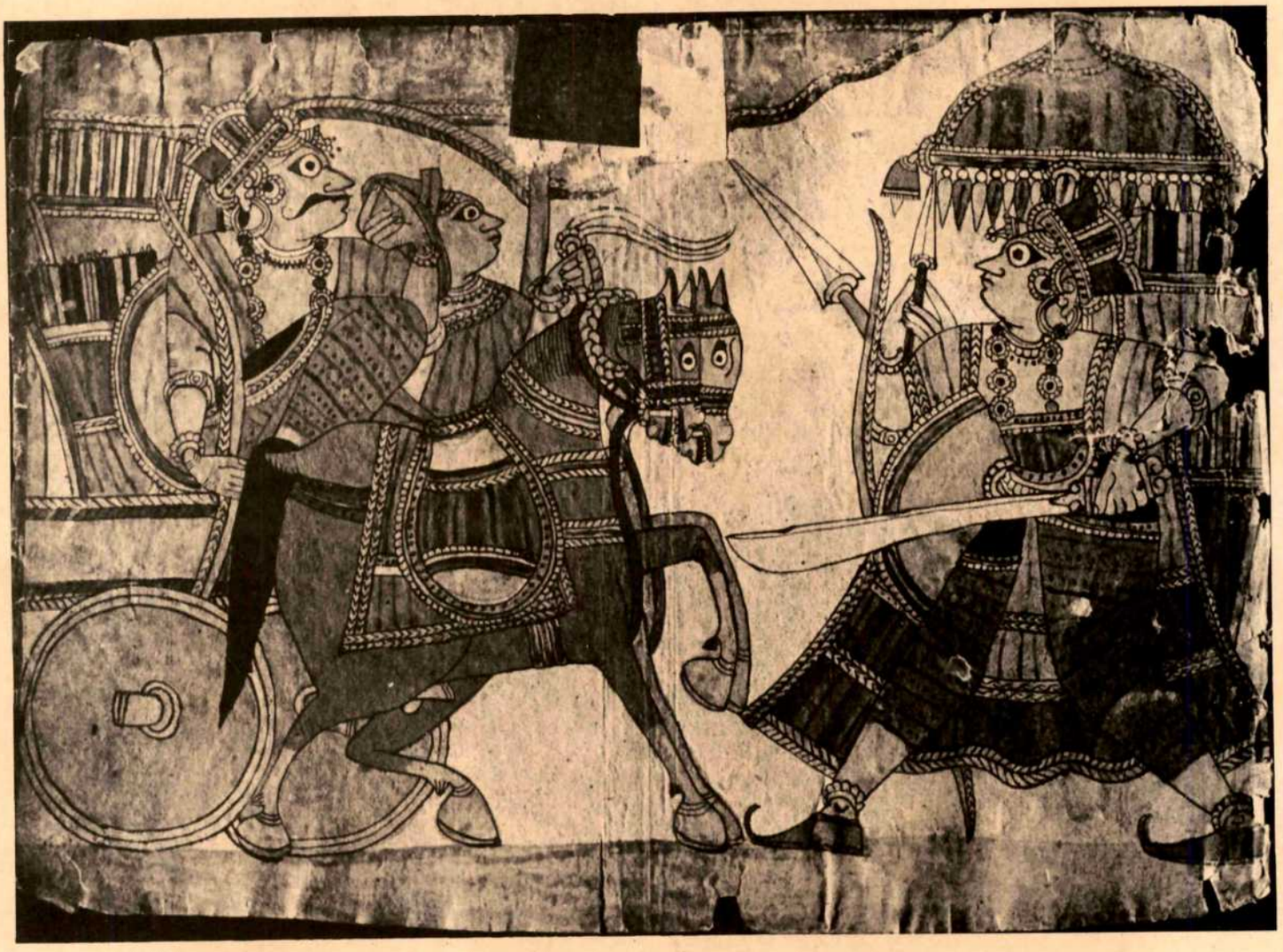


Engraved block in traditional design.

Colour-Chem

Pigments and binders



Chariot of many purposes

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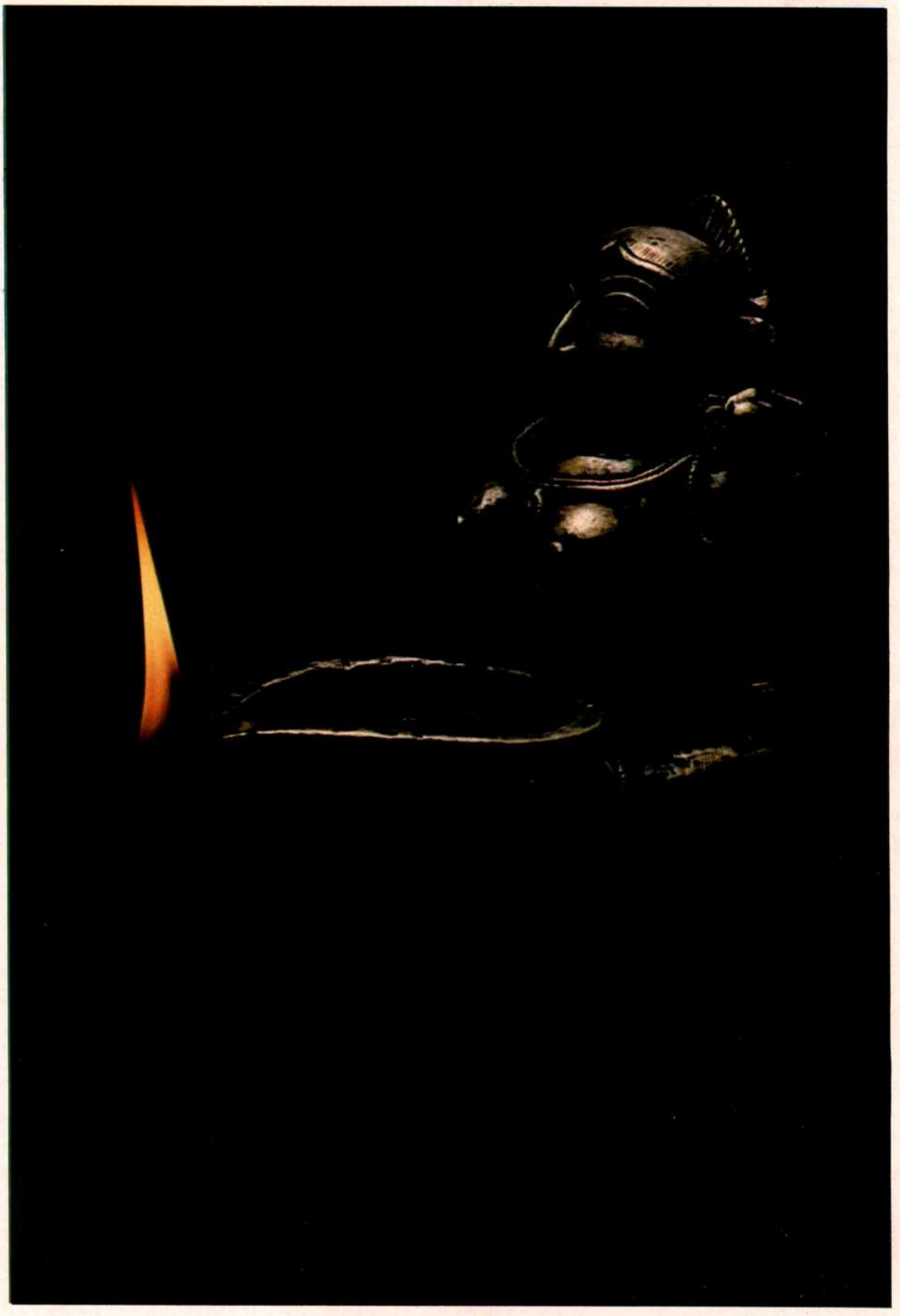
Seated Ganesha in bronze with the third eye

HOTEL BLUE DIAMOND, PUNE



Deepa Lakshmi in brass,
holding a lamp

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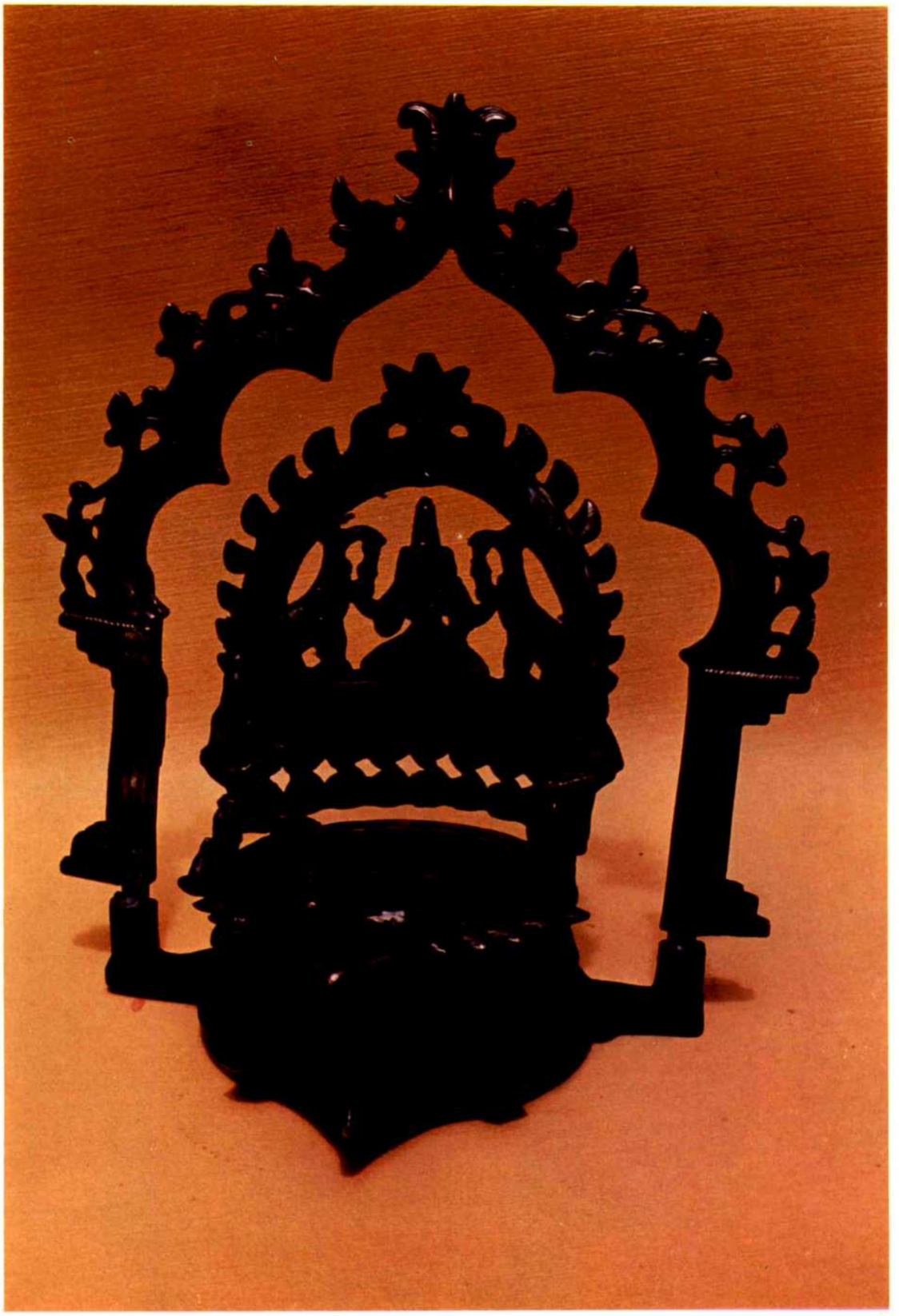

Gajalakshmi lamp from S. India, early 20th century

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Brass hanging lamp in bird form

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Homage to Kalamkari

Rama and Sita, accompanied by sages, monkey warriors and others being airborne in the Pushpaka Vimana

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MĀRG

A Tata Enterprise

A Magazine of the Arts

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COVER: A contemporary hanging hand-block-painted on raw silk mogha. Courtesy: Lady Thomson

MARG offers Homage to the Kalamkari traditional craft of India by way of doing honour to the generations of craftsmen who produced masterpieces of painted-printed cloths in our country.

We wish to draw special attention to the works still being executed in the two important centers of Kalamkari—Masulipatam (Machilipatnam) and Kalashasti in Andhra Pradesh, whose significance has been heightened by the recent transformations by the talented designer and craftswoman, Nelly Sethna.

MARG wishes to thank the expert connoisseurs of painted cloths and chintzes and Kalamkaris who have contributed their knowledge and intimate experience of these traditional pictures.

Our gratitude goes to the All-India Handicrafts Board, Smt. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya and the Andhra Pradesh Government for helping to provide scope for appreciation of the Kalamkaris and in doing honour to the craftsmen engaged in this technique.

We also appreciate the co-operation given to us by Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, and various other collectors in reproducing their collections.

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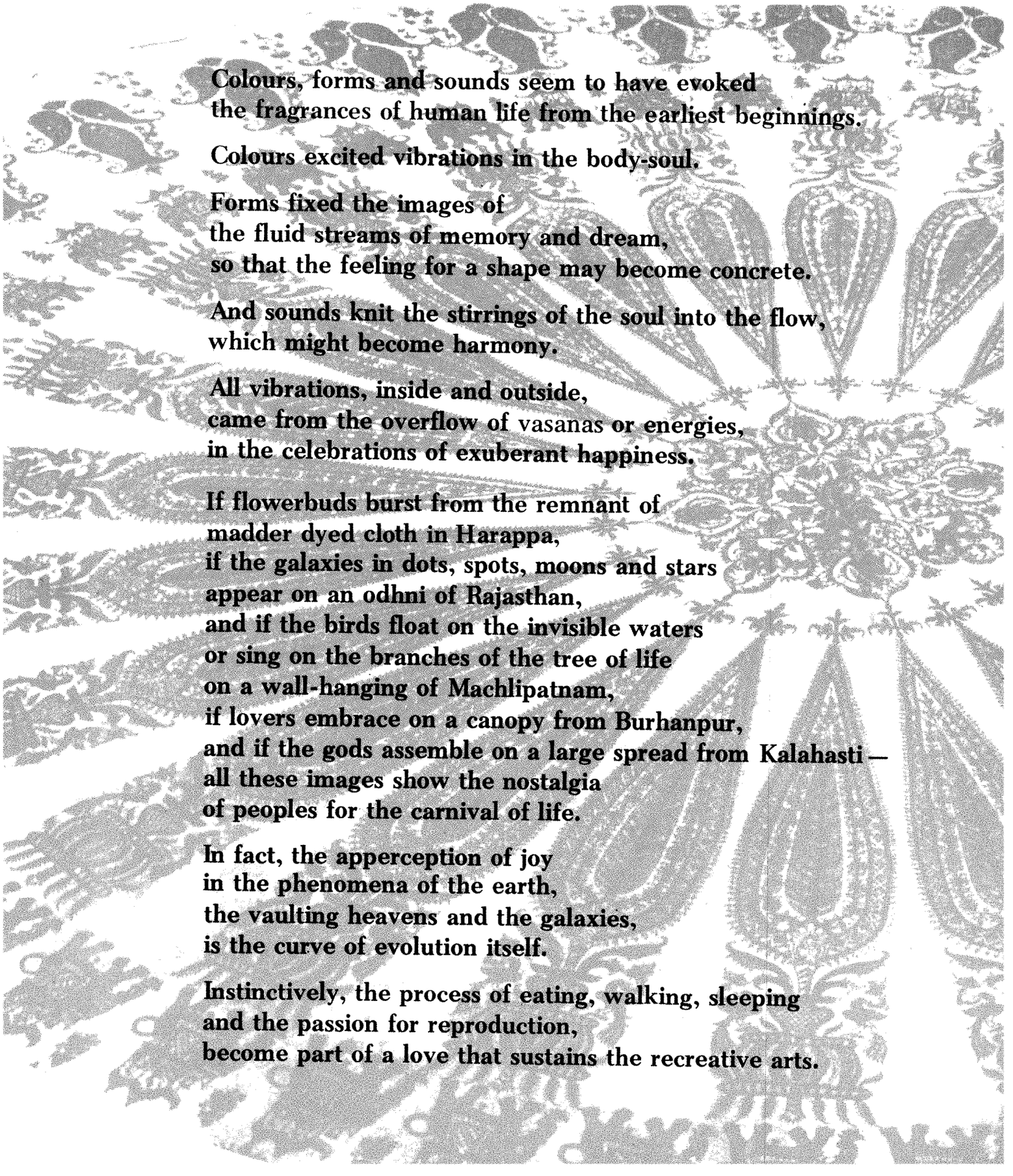
Homage to Kalamkari

(With reference to the Painted Cloths of India)



Colours, forms and sounds seem to have evoked
the fragrances of human life from the earliest beginnings.

Colours excited vibrations in the body-soul.

Forms fixed the images of
the fluid streams of memory and dream,
so that the feeling for a shape may become concrete.

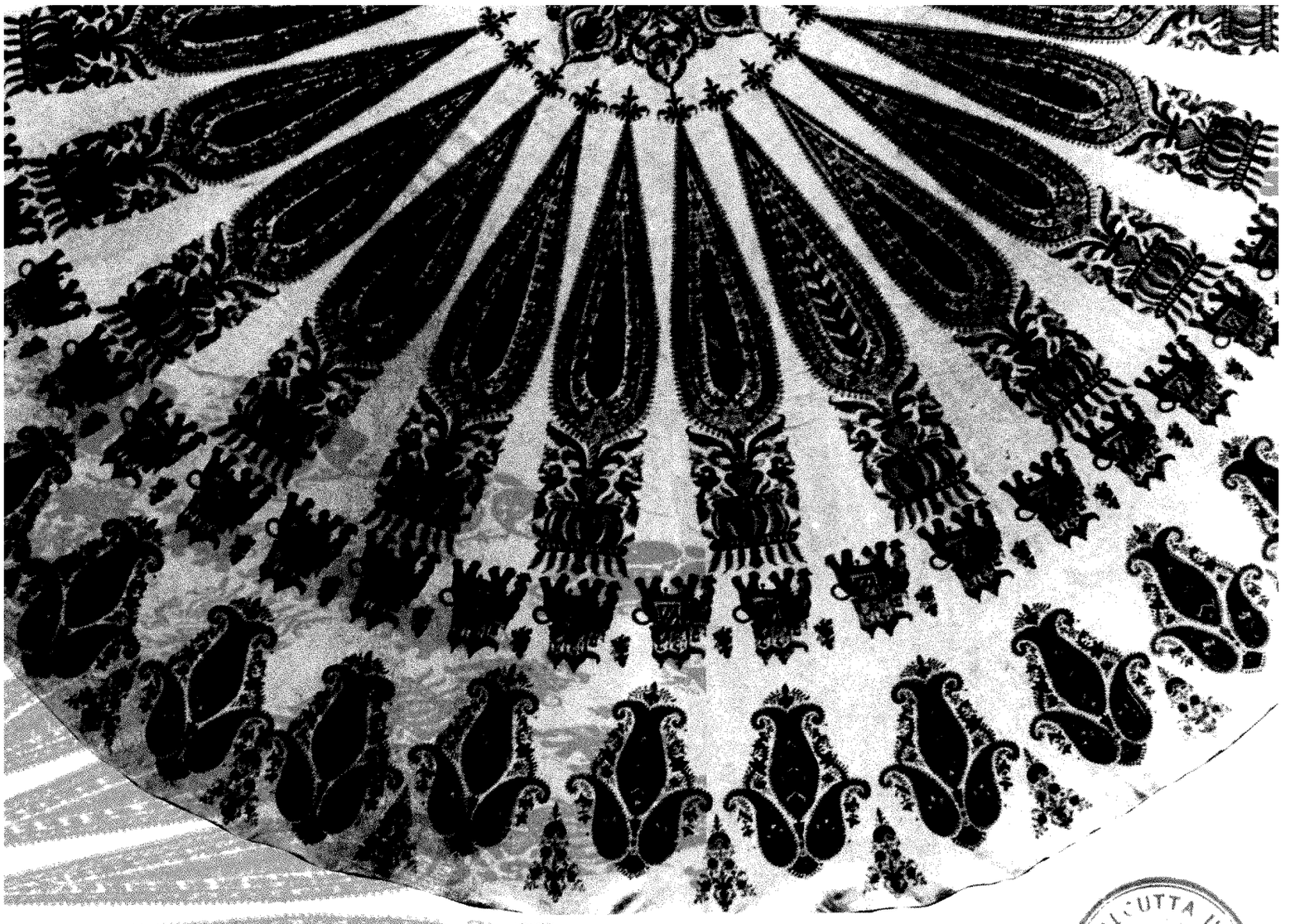
And sounds knit the stirrings of the soul into the flow,
which might become harmony.

All vibrations, inside and outside,
came from the overflow of vasanas or energies,
in the celebrations of exuberant happiness.

If flowerbuds burst from the remnant of
madder dyed cloth in Harappa,
if the galaxies in dots, spots, moons and stars
appear on an odhni of Rajasthan,
and if the birds float on the invisible waters
or sing on the branches of the tree of life
on a wall-hanging of Machlipatnam,
if lovers embrace on a canopy from Burhanpur,
and if the gods assemble on a large spread from Kalahasti —
all these images show the nostalgia
of peoples for the carnival of life.

In fact, the apperception of joy
in the phenomena of the earth,
the vaulting heavens and the galaxies,
is the curve of evolution itself.

Instinctively, the process of eating, walking, sleeping
and the passion for reproduction,
become part of a love that sustains the recreative arts.



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From the time the anthropoid ape became man
five hundred thousand years ago,
by making stone tools for cutting carcasses of animals,
to the one lakh years later
when he discovered the use of fire,
and twenty thousand years ago
when he domesticated the wild beasts and bred domestic dogs
by mating wolves and foxes to hunt the wild animals with,
till ten thousand years later
when he trained the ox and the horse to help him
cultivate wheat, and later, to make pots and pans
and baskets and cloth,
the experience of making itself enabled men and women
to absorb the flow of nature,
to revitalise themselves by igniting the inner spark of lightning
and produce the glories and splendours of civilisation.

There is no doubt that, for long periods, those who envied the happiness of others destroyed the symphonies. Maybe they could not evolve, through the impositions of their patriarchs, the rigid dogmas of the priests and the virulence of power-hungry overlords. They could not accept beauty, because the glare dazzled their eyes. And these barbarians always passed by without noticing the vibrant images in which the inner meets the outer.

Also, often the very creations which were integral to the sensibility, became redundant through the multiplication, by mechanical processes, of the old beauties, which had originally come from inner inspiration. The lure of greed made whole races into philistines, deriving pleasure from the most ugly things. Vulgarities and banalities prevailed. And beauty was drowned in the clamour of the market.

The creators became serfs in these dark ages.

Again, however, some human eyes dared to aspire for the summits of achievement of new creations. And a new refulgent age flowed in many waves, which overtook the storm and confusion and disruption. The heartening romance of the search for the beautiful opposed the ignorant and the damned. And the festival, which had been marred by the enemies of promise, with ill-conceived envy, possessed the new young, like the vision of a new heaven and a new earth. The incessant urge for perfectionism, as part of the compulsion to evolve, continued the creativeness, touching off the sense of exaltation, which is always dormant in the underlayers of human consciousness, even within the darkest mind.

The find of a fragment of a resist-dyed piece of cloth on a silver vase in Harappa confirms that the tradition of the mordant process of dyeing of fabrics is very old. It is possible that one of the exports of the Indus Valley civilisation may have been painted textiles. But the artefacts of painted pottery, terracotta toys, seals engraved with images and jewellery prove that, about five thousand years ago, the ancient communities had freed the hands from mere locomotive functions and made them into manipulative organs, urged by sheer bio-rhythms.

The Aryan tribes, who are said to have broken the Mohenjodaro order, left only memory images, in impassioned poems, in which the bards reacted, with great excitement, to the nature about them. They addressed the sea, the sky, the earth, the clouds, the dawn, for gifts of plenty, in romantic metaphors and similies. They felt they were inspired by these gods. And their utterances in the *Upanishads* show the will to possess life beyond all the handicaps. They even dared, in the *Hymn of Creation*, to try to fathom the heart of darkness. Their intelligence and physical energies conceived a dimly apprehended absolute god. Their main expression was in rhythmic words, poems, songs and chants.

The Vedic sacrificial altar was a square in which they burnt the sacrificial fires. No images of that time have survived.

But in the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, epics which reflect the process of Aryanisation of northern and middle India, there is mention of picture palaces.

The terracottas of the Mauryan and Sunga period, some centuries before Christ, show elaboration of intricate decorative costumes, as in the famous statuette from lower Bengal. But we do not know whether the resist-dye method on printed cloth was practised or not.

In spite of the doubts and fears of the existentialist Gautama, the adornment of the body, the indulgence in happy gatherings, and through the making of lovely things, continued, specially in the royal courts during the pre-Christian centuries. In the glittering palace of Ashoka Maurya, says Magasthenes, the Greek Ambassador, resplendent robes were seen in the daily life.

The flux of consciousness resulting from the mixtures of Greek, Roman and Central Asian peoples with the Indians, in the Gandhara, Kushan and Gupta periods, shows the evolution of very subtle and complex forms, with extraordinary refinement of skills, and indicates man's command of all his many faculties. And we see that rich, varied cultures were created in fluent movements of dance and music and poetry, and subtle religious thoughts.

All the strands of the first thousand years of various Indian civilisations percolated into a life-accepting spirituality. Man was aware that he did not live by bread alone and a rough and ready evolutionary hypothesis seems to have been popular—of the growth of human beings from the fish, the boar, the lion and the peasant to the God-King Rama.

Of the gods, Brahma, the Creator, was Supreme. He made the universe in a playful mood as *Leela* to amuse himself. The One became Many. And the Many were inspired, from within, to unite with the One cosmic deity, through the ecstasy of prayer, dance and music.

The compilations of Bharata about dance, which was considered the ultimate expression of life, the lovebook of Vatsyayana analysing in detail the play function of sex, the inheritance of Kautilya's *Arthashastra,* the classical dramas of Kalidasa, Sudraka and Harsha, the diplomacy of Lord Krishna and the surviving images of human, animal and floral forms, on such temples as Bhitargaon, have left us a heritage of richness, in which experience of the present seems to be the only commitment, the belief in the here-now, in which man is supposed to move towards enlightenment, understanding and depth. The earth seems to be the great highway towards the future.

Inevitably, culture as the cultivation of the soil of the personality, was confined to the king and his forty nobles, the four hundred Nayakas, the four thousand members of the upper hierarchy and perhaps the forty others.

The masses lived in the villages, cultivating the earth soil, in the heart of nature, in homes made of mud, aided in the production of their daily needs by the traders, the carpenters, the ironsmiths, the weavers and the water carriers. And all of them together were subject to the will of the high priest in the temple, convinced that the world is in a harmony, in spite of the pain, torment and horrors brought by constantly marching armies.

So warm and lush and happy was the Universe, as conceived by the Brahmins, that the life-negation of the Buddhists had slowly dissolved itself from the self-lacerations of the Hinayana to the Mahayana, celebrations of the pantheon of potential Buddhas seeking to become Enlightened Ones, reaching out, almost in the manner of the Hindu seekers, to Bliss.

From the paintings in the Ajanta and Bagh caves at the end of the classical renaissance, as well as in the Jain *Kalpasutra* pictures, and numerous wall paintings, we see on clothes worn by women, painted stripes and floral and bird pictures. We do not know if this apparel was coloured through the resist-dye process, or block printed, or woven with dyed cloth patterns, but it is obvious that the upper orders admired themselves in silks and muslins with gay colours on them.

It is possible that traditions of the painting on cloth and the practice of the intricate process of resist-dye on fabric were parallel processes, then and later. The motifs of sunflowers, roses, lilies and luxuriant foliage seen on clothes in the palm leaf paintings and the frescoes, and even the *alpana* ritual drawings on the thresholds of houses show instinctive expressionism.

The world of sensation, with the philosophy of Ananda as the highest ideal, lasted out among the folk through all the crises of invasions, infiltrations and disruption, because the villagers just scattered before the attacks, dispersed into the jungles, and came back after the waves had passed, much denuded of their worldly goods but with the traditions intact.

The guild of craftsmen lived mostly in the hamlets going to the small towns and capital cities when called by rich patrons. So the popular culture which was meant to provide utilitarian objects and decorations for the ritual of life continued to make the artefacts, in spite of the barbarians who often destroyed their works.

The sensuous beauty of the flowers, paintings on the walls of the village houses, the clothes of the people and the woodwork, appealed even to the Muhammadans, who began to infiltrate into India in the early mediaeval period. And as they were mostly fighting to consolidate their territorial gains and were constantly on the move, they tended to live in mobile palaces made from panels of thick cloth covered with decorative canopies confronting exquisite wall hangings.

The poet Amir Khusrau, who flourished under four kings of the Sultanate period has left memorable word pictures of the pavilions, in which the monarchs and the nobility enjoyed festivals of music and dance, despite the censorious words of the Mullahs of their faith. And the robes they wore, the silken sequins of the dancers, and the coarse but colourful clothes of the folk, even the patched quilts of the fakirs, show that the feeling for resplendent colours of the natives was accepted by the outsiders.

The Mughals who defeated the Lodi Sultans in the early 15th century, soon became insiders, specially under Akbar, who not only married a Hindu princess from Jaipur as his chief queen, but also took over the decorative arts, without restraint, scruple or concern about whether his borrowings pleased the priests and fanatical followers of Islamic taboos or not. It is obvious that the *Hamza Namah* paintings on cloth, initiated by Humayun, synthesised many motifs from Rajasthani paintings of all kinds with motifs from Persia, paintings from Tabriz and Herat, under Akbar.

One of the chief uses of cotton-paintings in the Mughal period was for tent-hangings — or, more specifically, for the decoration of the *Kanats* or screens which were used to surround the tents and give privacy to the occupants. It was the custom for a ruler to make journeys of state to all parts of his kingdom, to regulate affairs and administer justice in person. For his private pleasure, he would often engage upon hunting expeditions (*shikargah*), and in time of war he travelled in equally splendid display. The French traveller Francois Bernier has fortunately left us a vivid and detailed account of Aurangzeb's camp, as seen during a journey of state in A.D. 1665, with particular reference to the role of fine cotton-paintings on the resist-dye cloth:

"Whenever the King travels in the country", wrote Bernier, "he always has two camps, that is to say two separate assemblies of tents, so that when he decamps and leaves one, the other

Costume of this Princess in Ajanta wall-painting in Cave No. 1 shows painted fabrics with figures of ducks. The other figure has painted striped cloth.

Under the patronage of Humayun and Akbar, the two Persian Ustads, Mir Syed Ali and Khwaja Abu Sammad, with their Indian pupils carried out large-scale paintings (Hamza Namah), *on cloth, in lush colourful trees and flowers and detailed portraiture.*

will have proceeded one day in advance, and is fully prepared when he arrives at the destination of the new camp. It is for this reason that they are called Peiche-kanes (*paish-khanah*), that is to say, households which precede. These two Peiche-kanes are almost identical, and it requires more than sixty elephants, two hundred camels, one hundred mules and a hundred porters to transport one." Bernier goes on to describe how the animals are loaded with the tents and heavy equipment, and the men carry the more valuable and fragile articles such as "the porcelain which the King always uses at table".

"One of the Peiche-kanes has no sooner reached the place intended for the new encampment, than the Grand Quartermaster chooses some fine situation for the King's quarters, considering, however, as far as possible the symmetry of the whole camp, and the order of precedence which must be observed for the whole company. He marks out a square, each side of which is more than three hundred ordinary paces in length. Firstly, one hundred pioneers clear and level this space, make foundations of earth, or squared platforms, upon which they erect the tents. They surround the whole of this large square with Kanates (kanats) or screens of seven or eight feet in height, which they secure by cords attached to pegs, and by poles fixed two by two in the ground, at every ten paces, one outside and one inside leaning upon each other. These Kanates are of a strong cloth which is lined with *chittes* or cloths painted with portages with a great vase of flowers. In the centre of one side of the square is the Royal Entrance, which is large and magnificent and the *chittes* of which it is made, as also those which face the exterior of all this side of the square, are much more beautiful and rich than the others.

"The first and the largest of the tents erected in that enclosure is called the Am-kas, because it is the place where the king and all the nobility in the company assemble about nine o'clock in the morning to keep the *mokam*." Bernier describes how the king, when travelling, holds his daily council of state and administers justice in this tent, just as he does in the palace in his capital city. "The second tent, which is not much smaller than the first, and stands a little further into the enclosure, is called Gosl-kane (*ghuslkhana*).... Here the nobility assemble in the evening to pay their last homage to the king at the end of the day, as they do in the capital. And Bernier describes the magnificent sight, on a dark night in the open countryside, of the torchlight processions of the king and the nobility leaving this tent to proceed to their personal quarters to retire for the night. "The third tent, which is smaller than the first two, is called Kaluet-kane, that is to say the place of withdrawal, or the place of Privy Council to which no one has access but the principal officers of the kingdom, and it is there that all the most important affairs of state are discussed.

"Beyond this are the private tents of the King, which are surrounded by small *kanates* of the height of a man, and lined with painted *chittes,* of that fine workmanship of Masulipatam, which represent a hundred different sorts of flowers; and some are lined with flowered satin with long fringes of silk. Adjoining of King's tents are those of the Begums or princesses, and other great ladies and high officers of the harem, which are also surrounded like those of the King with rich *kanates*...

"The Am-kas and the five or six other principal tents are raised high above the rest, in order that they may be seen from a distance. So that they may provide a better screen from the heat, on the outside there is only a coarse strong red cloth, which is nevertheless decorated and varied with great bands cut in diverse fashions. But the interior is lined with those beautiful *chittes* of painted flowers made for the purpose, of that same work of Masulipatam; and that work is refined and enriched by embroidery of silk, of gold and of silver, with deep fringes; or by some fine satin of various colours trimmed with flowers, and many other strange fashions. The pillars which support the tents are painted and gilt. One walks only upon rich carpets,

CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY A.I.H.C. & ARCHAEOLOGY

which have mattresses of cotton underneath of three or four fingers' breadths in thickness, and all around these carpets are large hassocks to recline upon."

This description of a royal encampment and its extensive use of *kanats* can of course be supplemented by reference to contemporary paintings. The same type of *kanats* were in use in the sixteenth century, as depicted in the famous set of illustrations to the *Hamza-namah* painted in the workshops of the Emperor Akbar (see H. Gluck, *Die Indischen Miniatures des Haemzae Romanes,* Zurich, 1925, Plates 30 and 35, and Figs. 11, 21, 28 and 43).

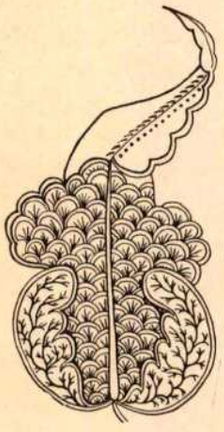
The *kanat*-type of hanging was made as a repeating row of similar or identical panels (usually incorporating an arch), to be cut by the user according to the dimensions of the screen it was required to cover. The three main producing centres were Golconda; Burhanpur in Khandesh, and somewhere else in the Mughal dominions (possibly either Agra or Sironj in Tonk State, or both). The collections of the Calico Museum do not include any *kanat*-hanging of the so-called 'Masulipatam' or Early Coromandel school (one hanging was probably intended for decorating the interior of a tent rather than a *kanat*), but it has good specimens of the other groups.

There is also evidence of the chintz being in demand in Persia, specially from the Persian Muslim-ruled state of Golconda, for use as floor coverings, bedspreads and the lining of coats, during the seventeenth century.

This may have been the time when the Persian word *Kalamkari* began to be applied to the chintz, instead of the Hindi word *chint.*

Masulipatam was the main centre in the middle of the seventeenth century. And it remained the constant factor in the trade for the Westerners, even though the Dutch established another more reliable base at Pulicat, and the English built one, first at Armagaon in 1626, and then at Madras in 1640.

The famine of 1646 killed off many workers from starvation and the trade between the Coromandel Coast and Europe suffered, until it was revived in 1660.



The process of the painted-printed resist-dye cloth making seems to have been, as we have already noted, a continuation of an old tradition. The intricacy of the work seems to have developed from traditional practice. The craftsmen were grouped in guilds everywhere and experimented with different materials in the local areas. For instance, the high quality of Masulipatam painting has been ascribed to the use of 'cherry' plant, which is said to have grown wild 'in the area overflown with spring tides at the mouth of the Kistna delta . . . .' The high concentration 'of broken or rotten shells in the sandy soil' may also have been considered an important aid to the achievement of excellence, in the dyeing and bleaching of the resist-dye fabrics.

The main items, apart from tent canopies, hangings, floor spreads, coverlets and prayer mats, were the export fabrics used for men's gowns, waist-coats and women's dresses, as well as petticoats.

The Kalamkari acquired the title of 'Palampore' in a perversion of the word 'Palang-posh', which means bedcover in Hindustani.

Alongside the Muslim court patronage and the inspiration of the European and Persian trade, there prevailed the process of resist-dye painted-printed scrolls in Kalahasti somewhat inland

from Coromandel Coast, for the creation of the images of gods from Hindu mythology, for use as temple hangings. This tradition, obviously deriving from ancient and mediaeval folk recital scrolls, penetrated into the temple towns of Tamil Nadu. And some of the most impressive large-sized paintings have been prepared in these centres, using the hand-painting and block-printing techniques together. The picturisation is often intricate, eloquent and dramatic, in tune with the declamatory art of the *Katha* recital, of which it was once the colourful background.

In the eighteenth century, the competition, from the export of these painted-printed fabrics, received a setback because of the needs of the home markets in the West to encourage the machine-made cloth. But in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the imports were revived. The Persian interest seems to have continued throughout, and Lahore, Faroukhabad and Jaipur seem to have flourished as centres of inter trade with Iran, as well as for the Indian market. Also, the popularity of the cheaply priced block-printed fabrics for household use seems to have multiplied the internal trade.

The discovery of such relatively cheap printed fabrics in a rubbish heap excavated in Al-Fostat, the old Cairo, which were block-printed resist-dyed imports from Gujarat from the 15th to 17th centuries, has helped to trace the development of the traditional design and emphasise the continuities. The patterns seem to have been influenced by manuscript paintings of western India of the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries and one of them indicates the impress of the Persian book cover of the sixteenth century. These remnants show that the fabrics were meant for canopies and grave covers.

The printed fabrics in which the handiwork was important. suffered eclipse after the machine-made textiles began to flood the markets both in the West and in India.

And though the survival of demand for the block-printed fabrics has continued until our time, it needed help from the free Government of India to revive some of the Kalamkari centres.

The inbred ritual of the Hindu temple where the pleasure of the gods was evoked, especially in the shrines of South India, made for constant demand for temple hangings. And Kalahasti, where the figures of gods were painted, as well as the myths and legends described, has continued to hypnotise the folk. These pictures unravel the mysteries of the faith of the oral culture.

Insofar as religion teaches that the life created by God is to be lived, and not to be thrown away, the people will take from these images and others, what they put into them – the faith in the inspirations behind the life-force itself.

The same applies to the fabrics for daily use, or in ceremonials and festivals. These will continue to be made as long as man's heart remains warm, and the inner longing for energising the nerves, the tendons and the soul is not lost.

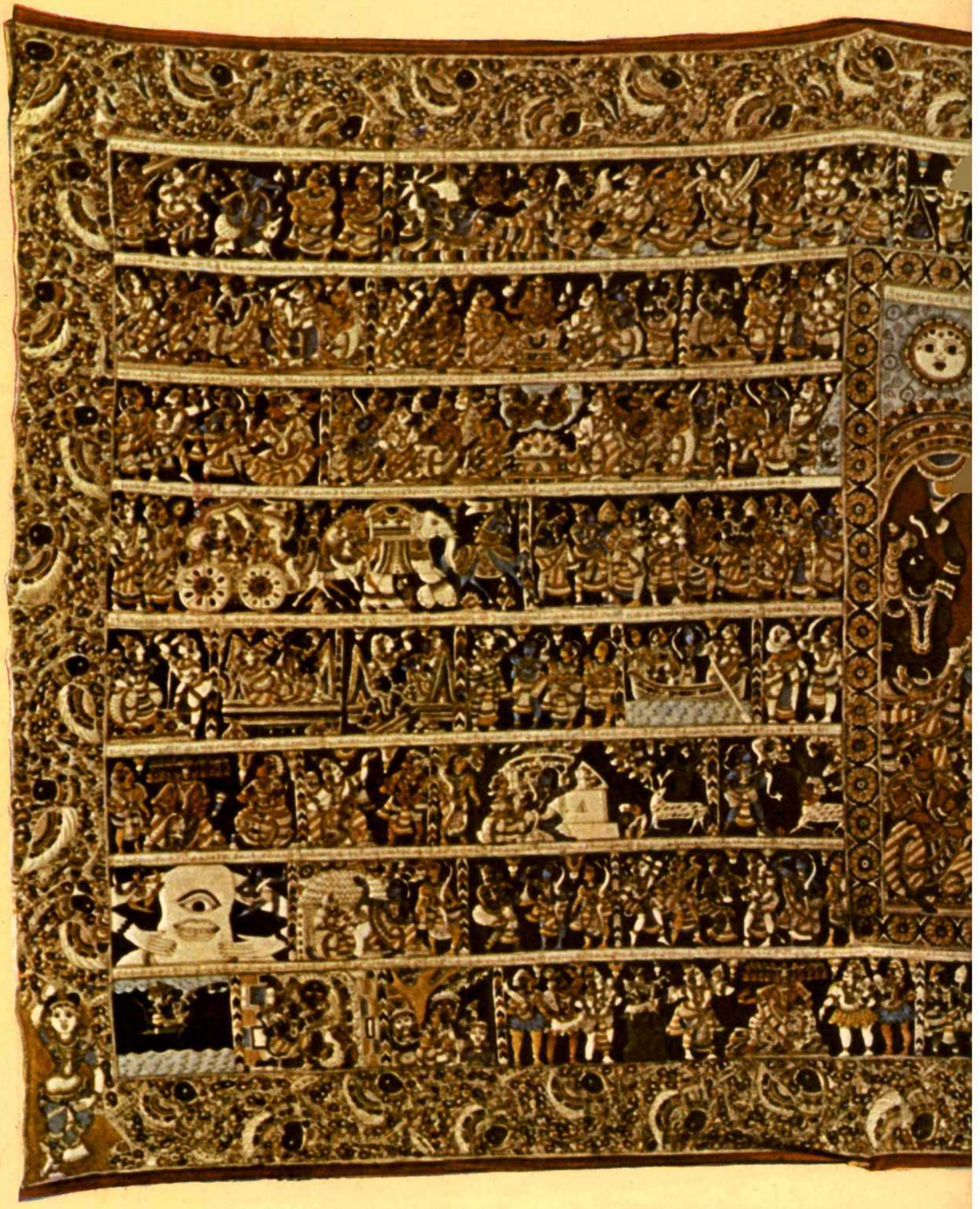
It is likely that the intimacy of the folk imagery in the fabrics with the eyes of the folk will keep 'our hearts of silk' alive, and, as a poet has said:

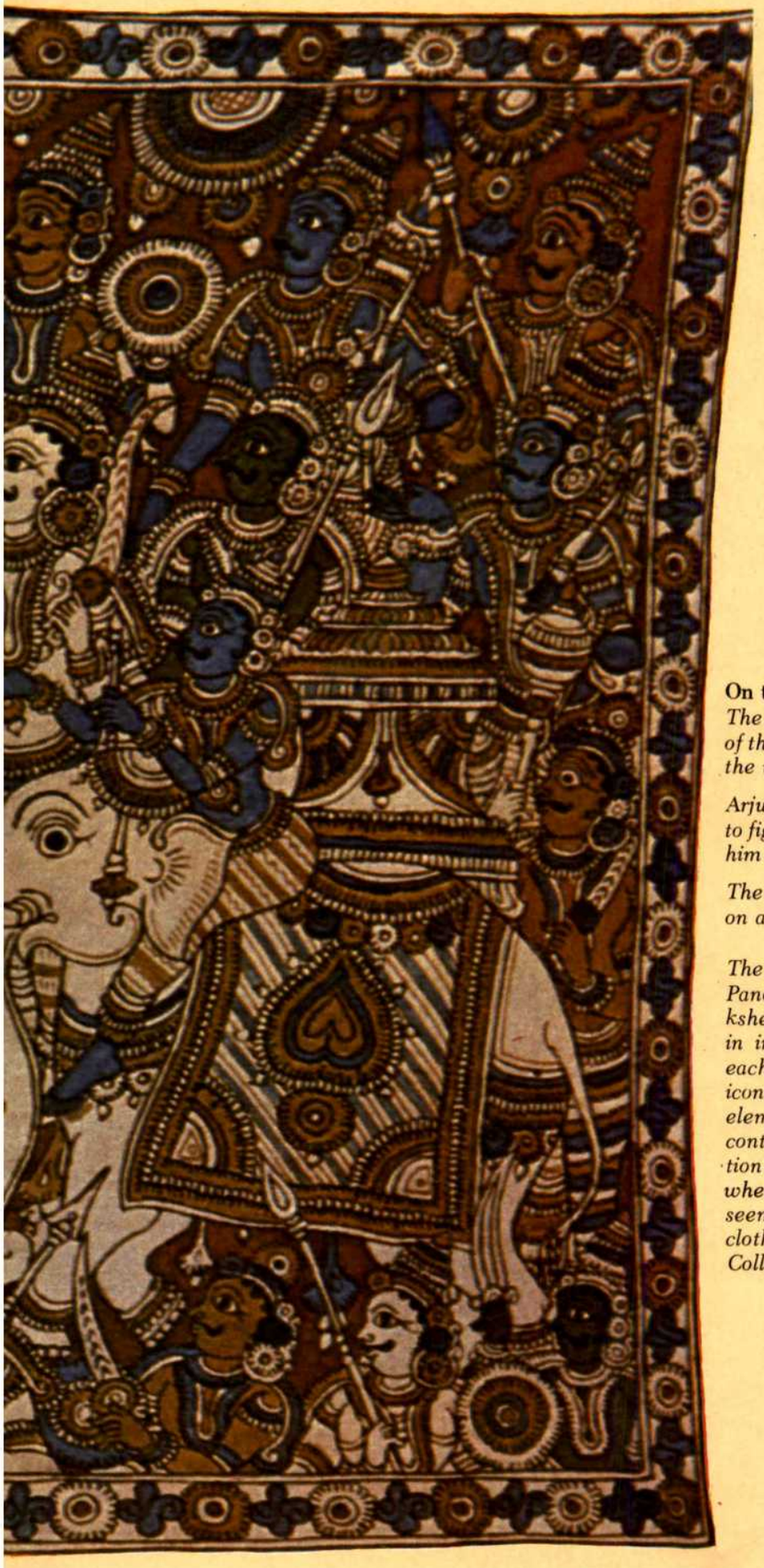
'Filled with lights, with lost bells, with
lilies and the bees...'

– MULK RAJ ANAND

Mahishasuramardini: The Goddess Durga, victorious over the Demon Mahisha. 'Kalamkari' on cloth from Sri Kalahastesvara, Andhra Pradesh.
Collection: David May. Photograph courtesy, Lance Dane.

Sampoorna Ramayana
The full story of the epic Ramayana is illustrated in continuous narrative on a cloth 30' long by 10' high. The legend is told in eight rows, and has about 60 scenes. Kalamkari, Sri Kalahastesvara, Andhra Pradesh.
Collection: Lance Dane.





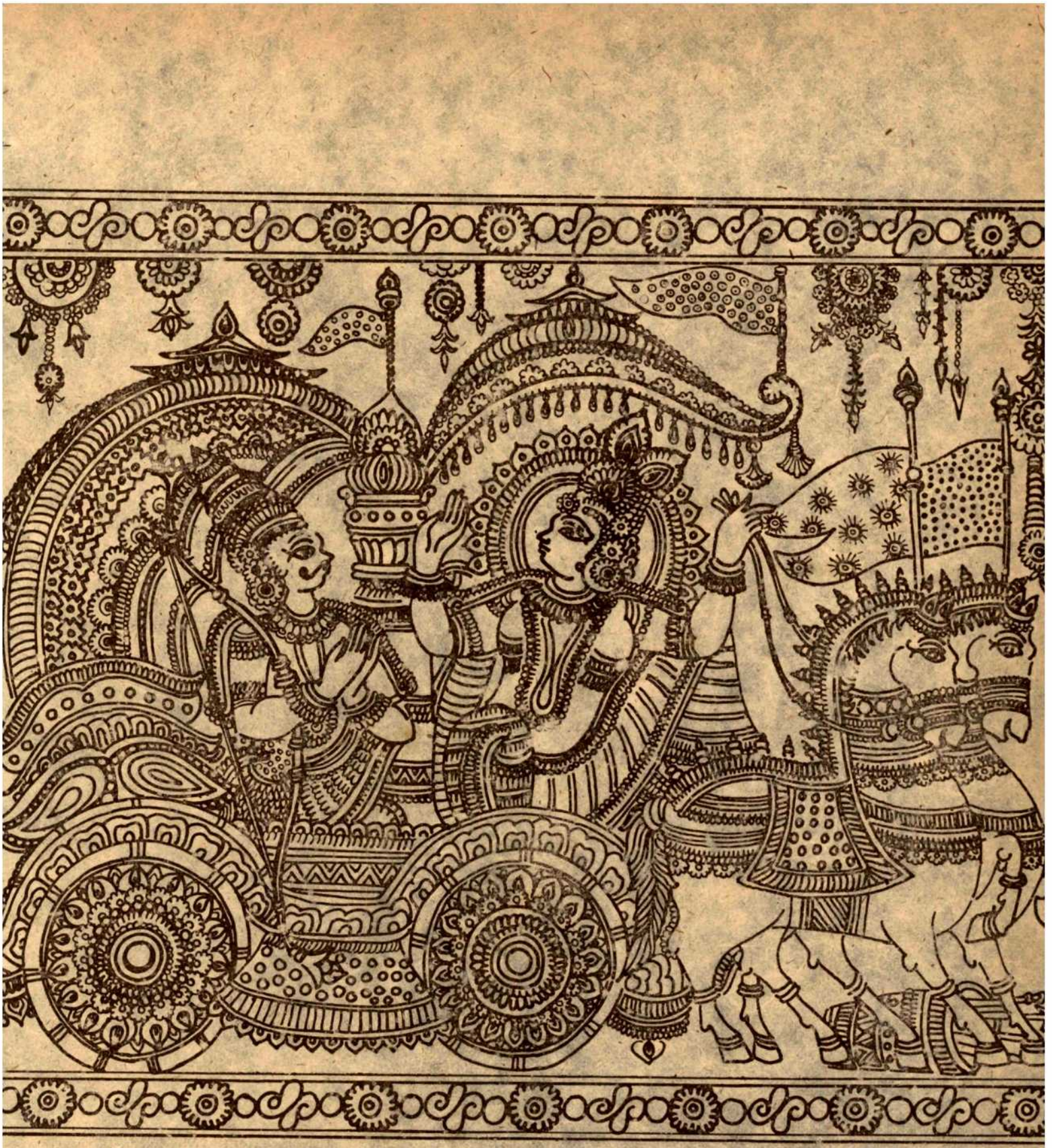
On the battlefield

The scene depicts Lord Krishna in the role of a charioteer of the Pandu prince, Arjuna, taking him to battle against the usurpers, the Kurus.

Arjuna, the Pandava, is much perplexed about whether to fight his cousins, the Kurus. But Lord Krishna advises him that to fight for a just cause is a rituous action.

The symbolical story of this choice enforced by God on a human being is variously interpreted.

The crowded scene of the beginning of the battle of the Pandus against the Kurus on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, has been rendered by the Kalahasti craftsmen in intricate detail with extraordinary skill in making each figure distinct from the other with the colours of iconography used to contrast into vividness, the various elements involved. The drawings on the panel are bold contours and the artisan is able to sustain the composition beyond mere decorativeness in movement everywhere. The mediaeval mural tradition of Vijayanagar seems to have continued in the painting-printing on cloth of the Kalahasti craftsmen.
Collection: Nelly Sethna.



Line drawing from another variation of the scene dramatising the choice by Krishna of the course of Arjuna.

Towards a Definition of Kalamkari

From the time when man switched over from bark, leaves and animal skin to woven fabric as a medium for the fashioning of costume, regional differentiation began to emerge of the basic materials in usage. Climatic conditions in Russia favoured the utilisation of fur. Europe developed linen, wool, and, at a later date, silk in the Mediterranean region. In Egypt the greatest finesse was reserved for linen. The Chinese had a monopoly over the weaving and fashioning of silk for many centuries. This tradition then began to disperse at first through Central Asia to Persia, and then through the medium of Arab hegemony, to southern Europe. Silk yarn was, however, woven at various places long before the silk industries themselves were established. From early times, and this relates to other woven fabrics also, prized textiles procured from foreign sources would be unwoven and the yarn would then be fashioned anew. This was done with Chinese silk in the Roman Empire and Indian cottons on the East African coast.

Kalamkari relates exclusively to the category of cotton fabric. It may be defined as fabrics patterned through the medium of dye, rather than loom. Cotton was grown over a very large area from Syria in West Asia to the Indonesian archipelago and China in the east. There was at no time any question of a single country or region having a monopoly over the cultivation of the cotton plant in the same manner as China had managed to achieve in the sphere of silk. Ochre was one of the few colours which cotton would take on quite easily, but for a range of other colours the fabric had to be initially treated with mordants which set up a chemical reaction, following which cotton fibres were able to absorb the desired hue. In India, a fragment of mordant dyed cotton fibre has been found at Harappa. This is a clear indication of the antiquity of mordant dyeing in India. Mordant could be uniformly applied over the entire fabric or it could be selectively applied, thus yielding variations in colour on completion of the dyeing process. Mordant could be applied either with a block or with a brush or pen-like instrument and this was effected on a pre-woven fabric. The weave was always a simple tabby weave.

It is because of the usage of the *kalam* (or pen) that the term *kalamkari* became widely known as a trade term at a later date. Although the technique may have been practised over a wide area, there were two important centres — India and Persia. Whereas a considerable quantum of information is available with regard to India, that relating to Persia is fragmentary and even inferential.

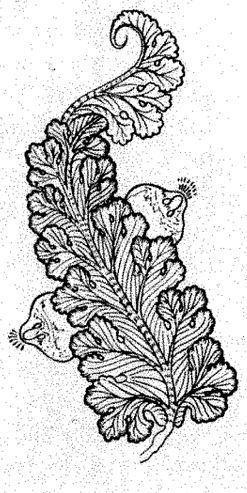
The usage of *kalamkari* would be linked to social practices. It could be used for decorative or functional hangings in domestic and monumental structures, as wrapping and covering material, or in costume. The degree of utilisation in costume would depend on climatic conditions and economic considerations such as that of marginal substitution. For the privileged élite decorative appeal would form an important consideration in the choice of fabric. Thus this category of patterned fabrics in India covered a whole range of textiles differing from the point of view of texture as well as pattern, the common features being that of uniformity in methods of dyeing.

The mordant-dye technique was practised in India long before the term *kalamkari* came to be associated with it. It was evolved to resolve the technical difficulties associated with the dyeing of cotton fabric with vegetable dyes. As I have said before, cloth had to be treated initially with mordant before the cotton fibre could absorb colour. Silk, therefore, remained beyond the purview of this term.

The method of painting mordant and resist onto cotton cloth was familiar in India as well as in Iran for centuries. As in western India, in Iran, blocks were also used for the purpose of mordanting. In the latter country, the term *kalamkari* was used for the first technique, while

those who engaged in block painting were called *chit-saz*. During the medieval period the Golconda Coromandel Coast was known for its superlative painted cloths. For reasons which have yet to be investigated, Persian merchants commandeered articles in this part of India for their own markets, and it was in this way that trade links between Safavid Persia and Qutb-shahi Golconda popularised the trade term *kalamkari* on the southeast coastline of India. Differences in technique spawned another difference in nomenclature. and this difference has given rise to considerable confusion.

I have referred above to the term *chit* being used with reference to the use of block in Iran In India, however, *chintz* did not have this clear connotation. In geometrical and floral designs, the preferred motifs of orthodox Islam, there is a repetition of theme. Although the use of the *kalam* would provide increased scope for artistic ingenuity, where price was an important factor, a quicker method would have distinct advantages. The two methods evolved were, firstly, the use of the block, and, secondly, the use of transfers. In the latter the pattern would be perforated onto paper, and then pounced onto the cloth by passing a muslin bag containing finely ground charcoal over the pattern which had been placed on top of the cloth. In Iran both methods are being practised even in our own time. In India during the early medieval period blocks were used only in Gujarat, and the Rocques Manuscript, compiled by a French eye-witness in 1678, provides a clear description of block printing on the west coast. On the east coast, only freehand drawing and the pouncing technique were practised. During the nineteenth century, the block appears to have been introduced on the east coast and at some indeterminate point in time, it appears to have replaced the pouncing technique. Today not even a memory of the transfer technique remains. Although in Gujarat the block has been used for figurative representation, as is evident in the category of *devi ne parda* or *matajine-pachedi,* the kalam has clear advantages. Where figurative themes have predominated, as at Kalahasti and Sickinaickenpet near Kumbakonam in the south, even to this day only the kalam is used.



The reason why we know so much about the technique of patterning on the southeast coast is because the Europeans documented the process in great detail during the eighteenth century. The technique of patterning cotton textiles by means of kalam and block was unknown in Europe. When the rage for Indian cottons swept through the Occident, there was a realization that it would be more economical to develop the craft in Europe itself, and this was the reason why they conducted meticulous inquiries into the dyeing process. These descriptions may be found in the work, John Irwin and Katharine Brett, *The Origins of Chintz,* London, 1970. It is clear that the terms *pintado* (Portuguese), *chintz* (English), *kalamkari* (Persian), *sits* (Dutch), all referred to trade textile of woven cotton patterned by means of the pen with mordant and resist prior to the dyeing operations. In the sense of the historical evolution of the word, therefore, until the nineteenth century it related exclusively to this category of vegetable dyed cotton textiles.

Chintz is a term which more rightly fitted the fabrics fashioned in Gujarat where the *kalam* was used only during the process of application of resist. *Kalamkari* would more properly be used with reference to the transfer and freehand techniques used on the southeast coast. The Persians already draw a distinction between *kalamkari* and *chit* in their own country. The Portuguese used *pintado* in the sense of *kalamkari.* The Dutch used the term *sits.* The English, however, created much confusion by using *painted* and *printed* synonymously with *chintz.* The French were also none too scrupulous in drawing a line between *toiles peintes* (painted cloths) and *toiles imprimees* (printed cloth), Hence we can say that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. although the Europeans were well aware of the absence of block printing traditions on the south-east coast, they were guilty of a certain degree of laxity in their choice of nomenclature.

If the definition of *kalamkari* I have cited is taken in a purely literal sense, then pigment painting could well be accommodated within the term. However, the definition quite clearly emerges from the textual contents of *Indian Painted and Printed Fabrics.* and the contents of this work are quite clearly limited to the range of mordant and resist dyed fabrics in vegetable colours. A volume is being planned, *Pigment Painted Fabrics,* which would cover items such as the painted *pichhwais* of Nathadwara. I, therefore, feel that in the above context, the range of *kalamkari* cannot really be extended to cover pigment painted cloths. To do so some other yardstick has to be used.

Having had the opportunity of watching the processes of vegetable dyeing at Masulipatam and Kalahasti with considerable attention, I would like to make a few comments. Certain colours such as brown which result from a combination of more than one colour, require a corresponding duality in the mordanting process. I would also like to remark on the sequence followed in the application of different colours during the dyeing process: black outlining is followed by red and other shades derived from madder. The resist is then applied. Following this the cloth is dipped into the indigo vat. Yellow is applied either before or after the indigo bath, depending on the shade of the colour green desired. In Masulipatam, indigo is now avoided as the process of application of resist is considered to be too time-consuming. The brush is used only for the application of the yellow colour.

Words change in meaning with the passage of time, and if they did not do so they would become obsolete. The medieval connotation of the term *kalamkari* would be conterminous with *chintz* as defined earlier. The impact of the Industrial Revolution made itself felt in India in many ways. European factory-produced cottons superceded Indian *kalamkari* in the overseas markets. In India itself mills began to turn out the same kind of chemically dyed yardage. It was only because mill-made items proved aesthetically, and, on occasion, functionally less satisfactory substitutes for handicraft ware in the field of certain kinds of indigenous costume such as the sari and dhoti, that the demand for these items in the handicraft sector continued unabated. Later an additional fillip was provided by the *swadeshi* movement. The basic unity of *kalamkari* tradition now became fragmented and regional terms came to predominate. It was forgotten that the *saudagiri* prints of Gujarat, the Masulipatam products, and those of Kalahasti and Kumbakonam, all sprang from a common tradition. Under such conditions it is possible that the term *kalamkari* was extended to cover pigment painted cloths. But this later hypothesis has to be proved rather than taken for granted.

In the modern context it appears to me then, that the term *kalamkari* has certain clear overtones. Firstly, although in the past the term referred to a *technique* rather than to a pattern, it now carries the meaning of traditional motifs which may be floral, geometrical or figurative. Narrative panels portraying mythological stories may also be depicted. Secondly, while vegetable colours are generally favoured, modern inventions are not ignored. Alizarin has largely replaced madder and some producers in Masulipatam prefer to use chemical blue rather than indigo, thus obviating the necessity of resist. On occasion, as at Sickinaickenpet, traditional processes are still being practised despite a total reliance on chemical colours. Thirdly, the basic medium continues to be cloth rather than canvas or any other material. Fourthly, the distinction between kalam and block has become totally blurred. And, indeed, I do not think that this distinction was ever really a valid one as indigo always involved the application of resist with the brush. In earlier times block printing failed to displace the brush for very cogent reasons. Brush painting yielded purer shades. Moreover, mordanting was a practical process rather than a scientifically evolved one. The final effect was achieved experimentally by successive applications of mordant and dippings in the dye vat. The same degree of precision could not be achieved by means of the block particularly where shading in the pattern was required. We can see, therefore, that if the question of pigment painting be left aside, the connotation of *kalamkari* shows few radical departures from the earlier meanings associated with the term.

— LOTIKA VARADARAJAN

Gaiety in Colour and Form:
Painted and Printed Cloths

Before we investigate the background of dyed patterned fabrics in India, it would be of value to determine what is meant by the term printed or painted textiles. For the purpose of these notes we shall limit the enquiry to those processes that are dependent on skill of hand. We shall exclude, therefore, all mechanical processes where the machine is utilised to produce a given pattern.

By printed textiles is meant all fabrics on which a pattern is produced subsequent to the weaving of the cloth, by the application of dye-stuff or pigment to the surface of the fabric. This can be done in various ways.

(a) By the direct or application process. This implies the use of the wooden block or silk screen directly on the fabric. This is commonly known as the block-printing and the screen printing process.

(b) By the resist or indigo process. This implies covering or impregnating certain portions of the cloth which are intended to be kept in the background colour, with wax, clay, gum, resin or other resist, so that when the cloth is subsequently dyed, the colour does not penetrate the portions which have been previously impregnated with the resist. The resist substance may be applied by brush or Kalam, by block or by hand. The cloth is then put into a dye bath, dried and washed and the resist removed.

(c) By the mordant, madder, alizarin or modern discharge process. In the mordant or alizarin process the cloth is prepared with various mordants prior to the use of the dye. When the cloth is then immersed in a dye bath, a chemical reaction of the dye on the mordant produces different colours on the cloth. Only those portions which have been prepared take the dye. Various shades are produced by variable use of the mordant. The colours that emerge have great depth and brilliance. The mordant and the dye can be applied both by brush or by block.

In modern discharge process the cloth is dyed in the desired background colour. The pattern is then printed on with chemicals, which results after further treatment, in the removal of the background colour from those portions where chemicals have been so applied. The discharged parts of the design can then be further processed.

(d) By the application of a thick pigment or "roghan" (which is made by mixing a yellow powdered colour with castor oil and then heating the mixture), to the fabric, thereby producing patterns which appear to be encrusted on the fabric. When gold powder is used in the pigment it is known as tinsel printing.

All these types of printing are practised in India. Direct or block and screen printing are the processes mainly in use in cities. Silk, rayon and cotton cloth are used as the basic material. Discharge printing on silk is limited to a few craftsmen in the larger cities.

The indigo, alizarin or madder and "roghan" processes are employed by "chhipas" (printers) in villages and towns where printing is a traditional craft, with a long and ancient history. The printers or chhipas are hereditary craftsmen belonging both to the Hindu and Muslim communities. Most printing centres are concentrated round rivers, tanks or wells, the waters of which are said to contain certain chemicals, calcium or alum, which at one time, when vegetable dyes were in use, were essential to the production of the deepest and richest colours. It is only in the last hundred years, with the discovery of alizarin, the colouring substance of madder, and of synthetic indigo as coal tar bye-products, that the use of vegetable dyes has practically died out. The old processes are still largely followed, but the dyes in use are chemical bye-products.

◀ *Sri Nathji, incarnation of Krishna, playing the flute and the cows listening intently. The painting on cloth is in gay colours.*

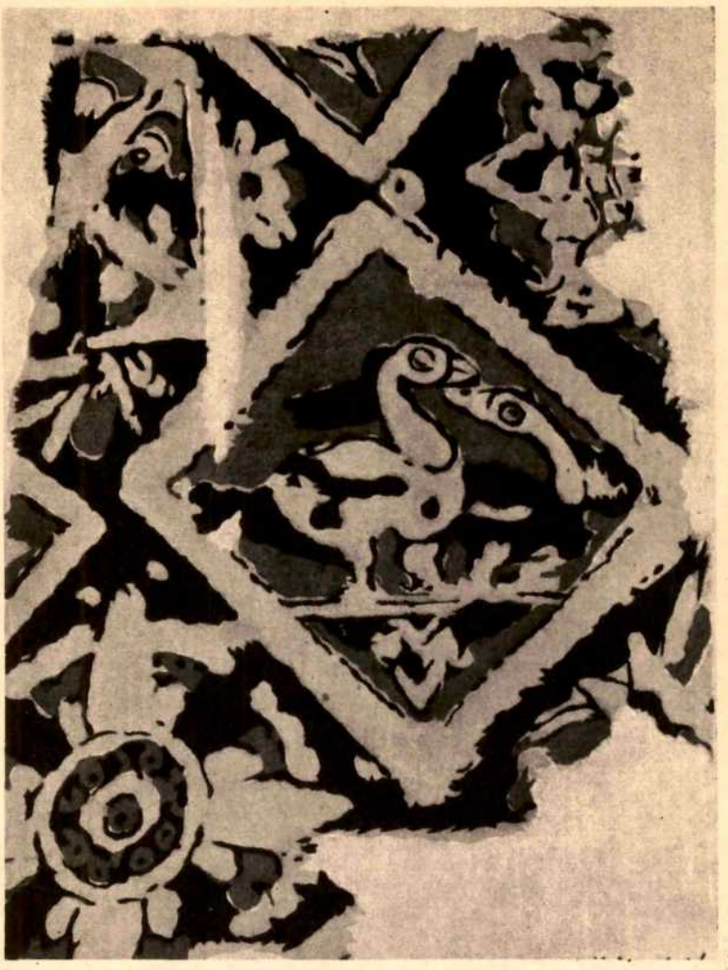
Photograph, Courtesy: Lance Dane

The discovery at Harappa of a fragment of a madder-dyed cotton cloth, sticking to a silver vase, establishes an ancient knowledge of the mordant dying of fast colours on cotton cloth. It is likely that an archaic concern with plant alchemy and an intense involvement with colour chemistry and the mutation of elements led to the discovery in the laboratories of the alchemist of madder dying wherein vegetal extracts react with mineral salts, sun, and water in a transforming alchemy that impregnates drab cloths turning them into the glowing sun-held colours of madder red. Indigo (*neel*) dyeing and the use of resists to produce variegated patterns on the cloth must also have been known from the earliest times. The transforming properties of the indigo plant (*Asuri*) are mentioned in the Atharva Veda and the varied tones of indigo blue appear in the clothes worn by men and women in the rock paintings of Ajanta, Bagh, and in the wallpaintings of Alchi and Tanjore. Indian cloths with their fast dyes and varied designs were famous throughout the ancient world. In the fourteenth century, Saint Jerome likened the lasting value of wisdom to the permanence of the dyed colours of India and Megasthanes in the same century records the use of flowered garments made from the finest muslins.

A study of the origin and development of printed textiles is rendered extremely difficult by the fact that no specimens of very early printed textiles have survived in this country. The earliest specimen of Indian resist-dyed cloth apart from the fragment found at Harappa dates back to the eighth century. It is a fragment of resist-dyed cotton cloth, with a floral motif discovered by Aurel Stein in Central Asia. Fragments of block-printed silk have also been found by Stein at some of the Central Asian cities. Innumerable fragments of resist-dyed cloths have been discovered from tombs at Fostat in Egypt. The earliest specimens date back to the twelfth century. An analysis of the indigo dye and the treatment of decorative motifs in these Fostat fabrics has led to the belief that the origin of these resist cloths was Gujarat.[1] A study of these fragments is fascinating, revealing as it does a highly developed sense of colour and design. Many of the motifs found on the Fostat cloths are identical to the motifs in vouge today. When we compare the Fostat fragments with the costumes of the same period worn by men and women, as revealed in the Jain miniature paintings of Gujarat, we find the same amazingly rich treatment of design and a unique arrangement of the design on the cloth. Dr. Moti Chandra in his book on Jain Painting has dealt in some detail on the varied treatment of designs on the cloths as shown in these Jain miniatures.[2] A similar study of designs found on the costumes worn by the Gods and Goddesses in the mural paintings in South Indian temples and the "pats" and illuminated manuscripts of Orissa would be invaluable.

The great colour belt in India which is identical to the great dyeing and printing belt extends from the interior of Sindh through the deserts of Cutch, Kathiawar and Rajasthan to the borders of Gujerat. It is as if the fierce sun and bare bleak stretches of sand have demanded compensation in the deep brilliant colours worn by the women of these areas. Colours appear here to be roasted and matured by the sun. They form a vital part of the background dictated by urges inherent in the environment and the character of the people who live here. As we go further south, colours lose their brilliance; they become darker and more subdued till at last they seem to quench themselves in the lush vegetation of the backwaters of Malabar. Practically the whole of the vast colour belt is studded with printing centres, with a tradition of resist-dyeing that stretches back to a thousand years. In some areas practically every village has its own variation of design and technique.

Centres of printing are known to have sprung up in Central India, Uttar Pradesh and South India. It was in these southern centres of printing that the craft of the chhipa found richest expression. Taking for inspiration the tradition of mural painting in temples, slowly being revealed at Conjeevaram, Tanjore, Cochin and Padmanabhapur, the great printing centres of Masulipatam, Pallakolu, Kalahasti, Negapatam, Salem, Madura and Tanjore produced Kalamkari cloths that are unsurpassed in vigour of design and freshness and richness of



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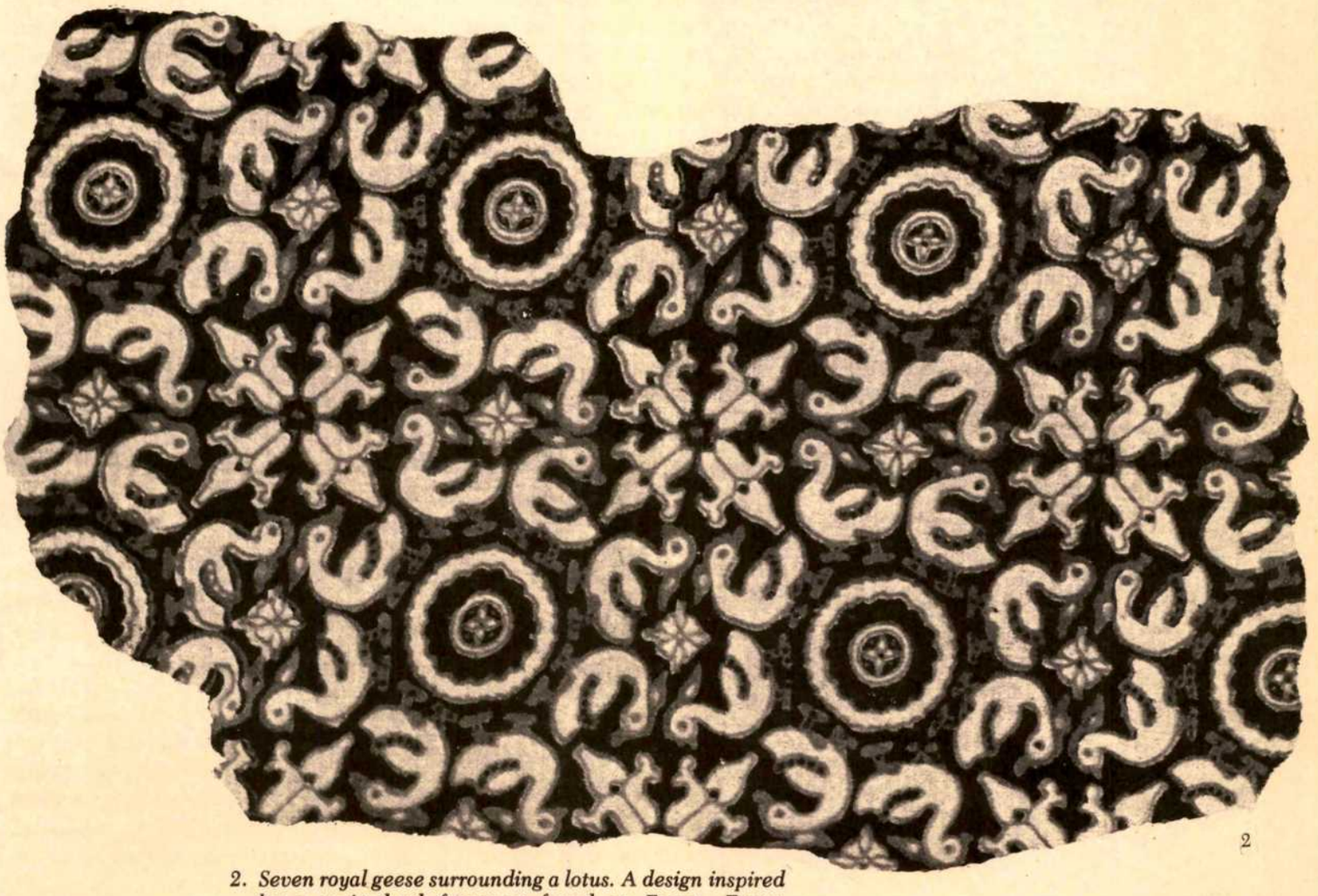
1. Fragment of resist-dyed textile from Fostat, Egypt.



2

2. Seven royal geese surrounding a lotus. A design inspired by a resist-dyed fragment found at Fostat, Egypt. A Bombay discharge print on raw silk.

colour. These painted cloths were really an extension of the mural technique. They, like the fresco paintings, illustrated stories from the puranic legends and from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata.* The myths were pictured in several complete units which were then linked together to reveal the story.

A study of available material establishes two main trends in the printing tradition. Arising as they must have done from a common field, from the urge in man to decorate the garments he wore, and based on a common technique, the bifurcation must have arisen early in the history of printed fabrics. The flowered muslins worked with gold, described by Megasthenes, is a far cry from the resist cloths found at Fostat. As the gulf between the ruler and his court and his subjects widened, this deviation gathered strength. It was only however with the advent of craftsmen from Persia in the train of the Moghul Emperors, saturated with the decorative symbology of the famous chintzes and the brocades and carpets of their country, that the demarcation between the two trends became firmly established. These two streams of craftsmanship may be classified as the earth tradition, and the mosaic and inlay tradition.

I have already mentioned the great colour belt stretching from Sindh to the southern borders of Gujerat. The northern area of this tract was also the great pottery belt stretching back in time to the ancient cities of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa with their storehouse of painted red and grey-ware pottery. The resemblance between the designs found on early specimens of resist-dyed fabrics traced back to these areas, the cloths worn today by women in the interior villages in this belt and the painted designs on pottery found at Harappa, Kuli and other prehistoric sites, is striking. I have already mentioned the discovery of a fragment of madder-dyed cloth at Harappa; from ancient sites in the Quetta region have come pots painted with designs copied from Sassanian fabrics of the sixth and seventh centuries A.D., indicating the use of common decorative motifs between dyed cloths and pottery.

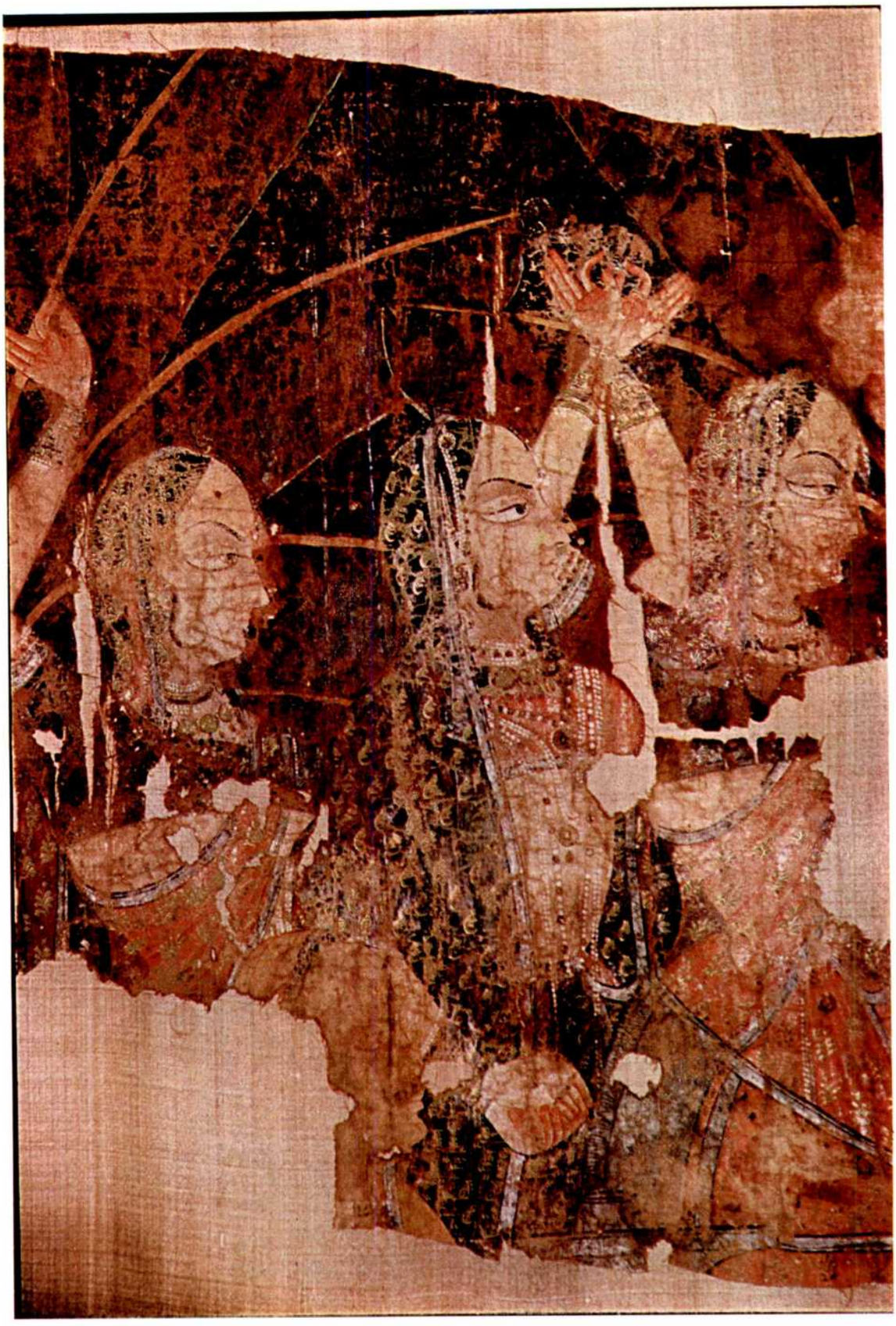
In the resist-dyed cloths there is the use of the same earth colours as found in pottery. The colours of these cloths are a deep lustrous red, black, indigo, off-white or dusty pink and purplish brown. The design in black is applied on the dull red background. At times two tones of the same colour are used to produce the design. Where the background is left white, it is never a dead white but a dull pinkish tone – the design being stamped in tarracotta red or dull brown. Here again we can trace a strong resemblance to the Quetta wares with their white backgrounds and designs in purplish brown.

It is, however, in the treatment of decorative motifs and the arrangement of these motifs on the fabric that the resemblance between printed cloths and prehistoric pottery ceases to be a matter of conjecture. In both pottery and resist-dyed cloths we find a total absence of the naturalised floral forms strewn across the cloth. Decorative motifs are geometric and highly stylized. Rings, dots and zig-zag ornaments are commonly used. Leaves, particularly the pipal leaf, is a motif common both to pottery and resist cloths. The lotus flower, birds and the human form are occasionally found. Designs are arranged in panels both horizontally and vertically, these panels being outlined with multiple lines or sometimes with checks.

A deeper study into the treatment of design and decorative motifs found in resist-dyed cloths is necessary before we can arrive at any definite conclusions—it is not however possible to dismiss the resemblances as insignificant. Resist cloth dyeing in the earth tradition survives today in innumerable villages in Gujerat, Kathiawar, Rajputana and Central India. The most famous centres are Rajpur Desa near Palanpur, Baroda and Ahmedabad in Gujerat, Bagasara, Surendranagar, Cutch in Kathiawar and Sanganer, Bagru, Jodhpur, Udaipur and Jaisalmer in Rajputana.

3

3. *Fragments of perhaps the earliest known pichhavai, Kishangarh style. The central figure is Krishna, as Shri Nathji, superbly enriched in gold encrusted with jewels. His neck and chest are draped in a great profusion of necklaces and beads. Holding up a diaphanous scarf, his lower hand holds a spray of lotus buds, which are worn as a garland.*



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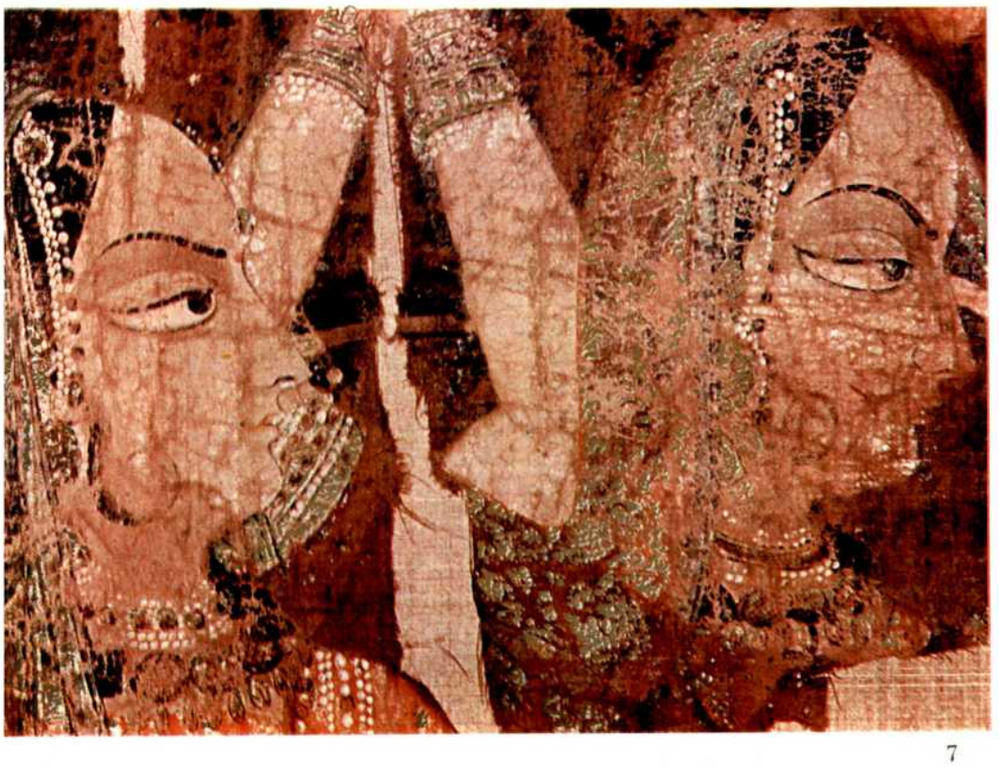
4. *The Gopis, who in the original pichhavai, must have been composed to show the beautiful maidens in a half circle dancing in a lively manner, tossing their heads and raising hands in sublime devotion around the central figure of Shri Nathji.*
They are dressed in their finery with heavy jewellery, beads and necklaces, their heavy bosoms contrasted with slim and supple waists are covered with diaphanous fold of saris with much gold-leaf work.

5. *The dance composition, though static in the painting, captures the graceful simple continuous movement, of such devotional dance, which have in their choreography on age-old, repetitive point-counter-point movement. The hands clasped together, held high above the head, fingers gesturing as if holding a fair blossom, the bejewelled wristlets and anklets, add their vibrations to the music.*

5

6, 7. *The faces typically drawn in profile have the forceful dramatisation of the sweeping brush line shown to perfection, the upswept brow, the fishlike shape of the eyes and the truly wonderful thin pen-made sweep of line, to hold within it the lovely shapes of nose and nostril and bow-shaped lips, voluptuous, sweet and innocent. Here indeed, the artist has shown us the mastery he had over the flow of colour and form.*



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These pichhavai fragments (the cloth hanging behind the God), from Nathadwara, Rajasthan, are early eighteenth century A.D. Collection: Pupul Jayakar. Photographs Courtesy: Lance Dane.

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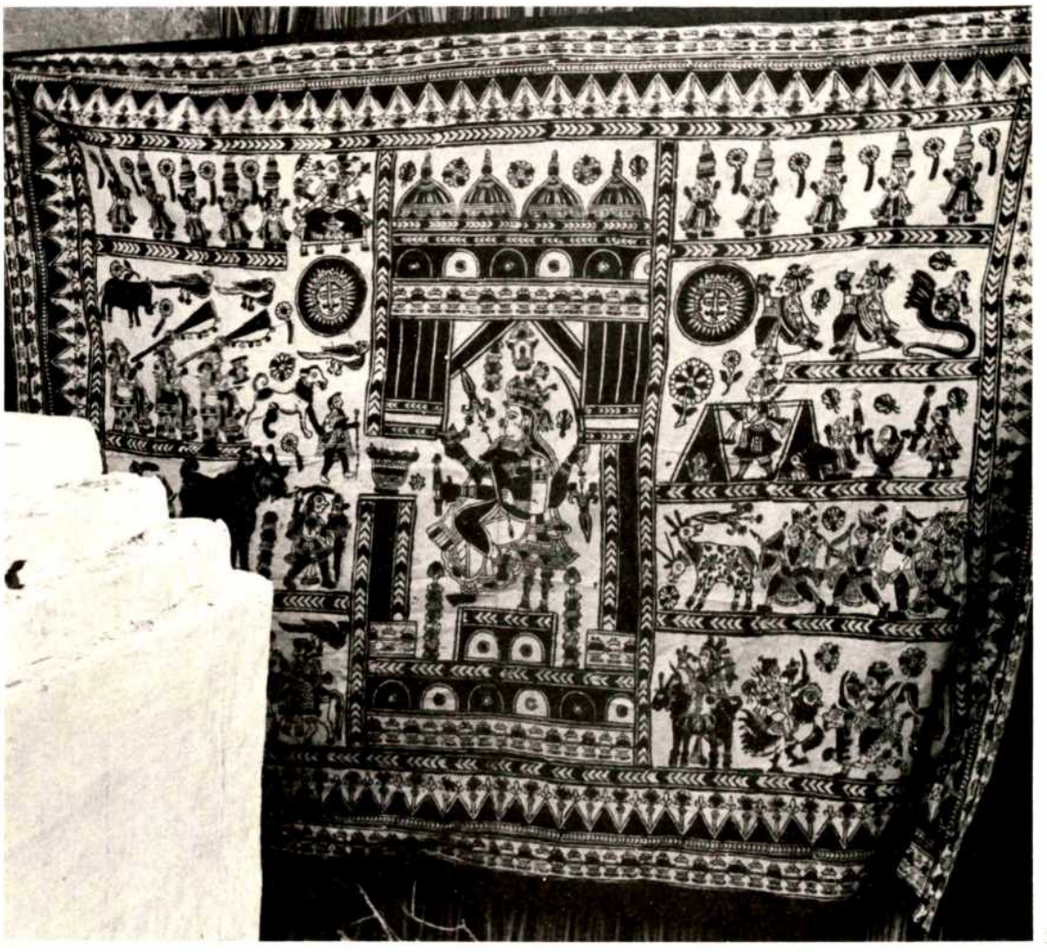
8. *A marvellous painted composition in the style of a miniature, is transformed here into a vigorous mural-size painting on cloth. This beautiful pichhavai from Nathadwara illustrates Krishna dressed as Shri Nathji multiplying infinitely, so as to dance with each of the gopis in the circle of movement, around the divine couple who swirl in the centre of the Rasa Leela.*
Against the white ground, the brilliant display of gold, reds and greens, and rainbow colours, fills the eye with the joyful spectacle of the dance.
Each leaf, flower, and bird, has a breath-taking liveliness. The foliage on the sides frame the dance, while the Sky Gods riding in their chariots gaze down from the heavens on the scenes below.

9. *A detail from the left side of the above which exhibits the beauty of the trees and bushes. The peacock, birds and monkeys are spectators to the vigour of the circling dancers.*

Photograph Courtesy: Lance Dane.



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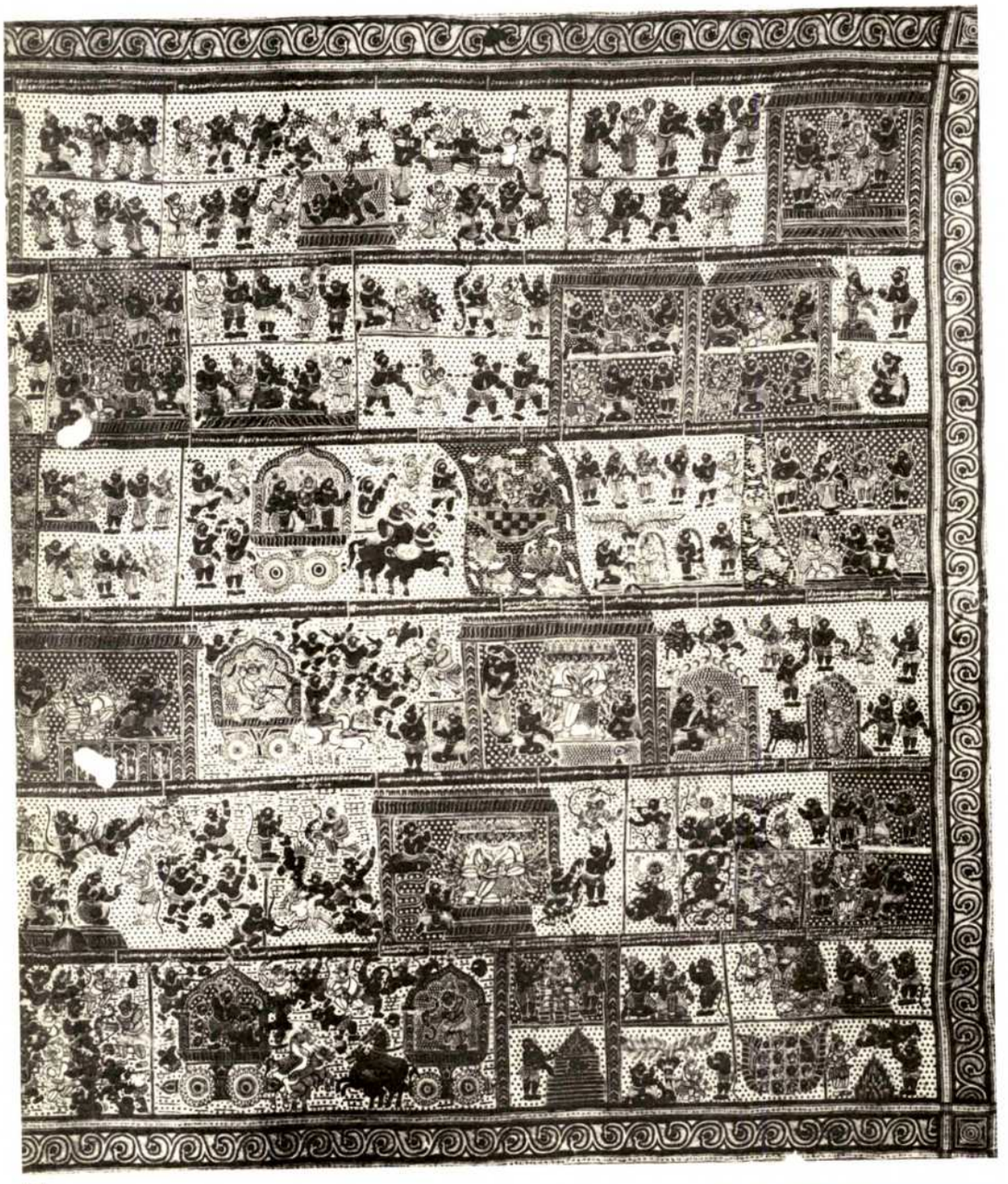
10. *Temple cloth from Ahmedabad. These cloths are produced in the mordant technique. The main theme is the great mother Goddess, Durga. Surrounding her are illustrations from the cycle of Puranic legends. (Photo: Fischer-Jain-Shah).*

11. *Fragment of an old Kalamkari temple cloth from South India.*
Courtesy: Madras Museum. (Photo by V. K. Rajamani)



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12. *A part of an old South Indian temple cloth. An interesting feature is the spotted background against which the figures are drawn. Courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi.*
13. *An old block-printed border from Rajasthan.*
14. *Contemporary block-printed cotton cloth.*

The mosaic or inlay tradition in Textile ornament is synonymous with the emergence of the great craft schools that sprang up round the Moghul Emperors and their courts. The Moghul Emperors were patrons of exquisite sophistication and the painted fabrics that were created under their patronage bear the stamp of this elegance and preciousness. A study of Moghul miniature painting reveals the extraordinary beauty of some of the painted fabrics worn by the King and his courtiers. A favourite form appears to have been the sashes worn over the main garment. The end pieces of these were painted with exquisite floral nosegays or the Tree of Life. Gold was nearly always used to outline the pattern. Some specimens of these sashes have survived.

The inspiration behind the printed cloths of this period is the same inspiration that produced the floral decorative motifs in Moghul miniature painting, the enamel work and the exquisite precious stone inlay work in marble so often used in the architecture of the Moghuls. If the basic effects of the earth cloths was of relief in red sandstone, these court fabrics were reproductions in cloth of the effect of marble inlay. Floral designs predominate and bear evidence of the great love the Moghuls had for gardens and flowers. The treatment is formalized but the "buties" or floral nosegays are strewn over the whole length of the cloth. There is a marked absence of geometric designs and the use of panelling to break up the design. The floral motifs are shaded in various tones of the same colour to produce a deep rich effect. The colours mainly used are various tones of madder red, indigo, green and yellow.

The Tree of Life was often used as a decorative motif to ornament the wall hangings that were used in palaces and in the royal tents. In the Masulipatam cloths the tree trunk bases and flowers were filled in with a fern like tracery. The cone in various forms was an ornament generally used to decorate these cloths.

The most famous centres for the mosaic or inlay tradition right up to the end of the nineteenth century were Masulipatam, Kalahasti, Salem, Negapattam, Kumbakonam, Pallakolu in South India and Sanganer in Jaipur. The cloths of the Southern centres were known as "Kalamkaris". The processes used in the production of these cloths were basically similar to the ones already described. The indigo and the madder process were both used to produce Kalamkari cloths. In the fine early cloths the Kalam or brush was used to outline the design and fill in the dyes and resists. Blocks were used in later years to impress the design or fill in the colours. However, the various mordants, resists and dyes continued to be applied by a Kalam or brush. Bee-wax is used as a resist medium in contemporary dyed cloths of Masulipatam. A detailed description of the manufacturing process in use upto the early mediaeval century is given by Hadaway in his book *Madras Printed Cloths*[8] and by C. P. Baker in his *Calico Painting and Printing in the East in the* 17th *and* 18th *Centuries.* (London 1927).

From the middle of the nineteenth century, the demand for painted fabrics diminished. The reason for this is not difficult to find, rooted as it is in the socio-economic background of this country. The disappearance of the indigenous market was the result of a growing desire on the part of our leisured classes to adopt a hybrid culture pattern based on an imitation of the Western way of life. The new rich that were coming into existence as a result of the emergence of changing economic relationship, not only demanded designs based on the cheapest imitation of Western art forms but soon recognized the possibility of reproducing hand craftsmanship by mechanical means. With this a rapidly diminishing export market for painted fabrics dealt a severe blow to the printing industry.

Trade in printed cottons has been known to have existed from the earliest times. Five thousand years ago trade in cotton cloth known as Sindu existed between Harappa, Baluchistan and Babylon. Right from the beginning of this era, land and sea routes carried cotton printed

fabrics to Egypt, Arabia, Turkastan, China, Siam and Java. The trade was of such magnitude that whole villages sprang up solely concerned with producing cloths adapted to suit the demands of foreign markets. A village known as Pithapur near Ahmedabad still exists, composed solely of block makers producing blocks for the manufacture of "Soudagir" or Trade cloths. Till recently heavily glazed resist and madder dyed "Soudagir" cloths produced in Ahmedabad were being exported to Siam, In Masulipatam saris are produced today which are known as Multan Saris. In Tanda in Fyzabad, U.P., special printed cloths are being produced for the Nepal market.

From the fifteenth century, Portugese merchants were importing painted and printed fabrics into Europe. These came to be known as Pintados, Chints, Chites, Chidneys. By the seventeenth century these cottons had become extremely fashionable in England and France. In fact, so great was the trade that it threatened the woollen industry in England. By the beginning of the eighteenth century laws were passed in England prohibiting trade in Indian cottons and soon after, the wearing of painted and printed cottons was prohibited by law.

At the time of the Independence, the art of painting and hand-printing cloths with the ancient techniques was dying. The discovery of synthetic alizarin in England in 1869 and synthetic indigo by the end of the nineteenth century led to a major revolution in the dyeing and printing industry. In the West where for centuries chemists had searched for fast colours to replace fugitive dyes, the trade in hand-printed cloths from India to the West was arrested and machine-printed cloths made in Manchester imitating the Indian design vocabulary appeared in the bazaars of India in turn leading to a rapid shift in Indian craft centres from the old, time-consuming processes of vegetable dyeing to the use of synthetic dyes. The village dyer with no access to the chemical laboratories which demonstrated the use of these new synthetic dyes adapted them into his craft idiom without comprehending the chemical processes involved. Often this led to fugitive colours replacing the ancient fast tones.

The establishment in 1955 of the Weavers' Service Centres of the All-India Handloom Board led to a major emergence of textile printed fabrics expressing the great genius of this country's comprehension of colour, design and texture. Conceived as training, research and service units, these centres were manned by gifted designers and weavers and skilled textile chemists and dyers. Working with the finest traditional craftsmen they brought to colour craftsmanship a dynamic dimension, a sophisticated understanding of the new tools and the new possibilities available through a professional and extended use of the new technologies within a craftsman's idiom. The results were textiles of high sophistication and excellence. Taking advantage of yarn-dyed fabrics specially conceived as suitable for discharge printing, weaving, dyeing and printing have been co-ordinated to produce results that have brought tradition and the new technologies together. Inspired by the old Kalam-painted cloths of the Coromandel Coast, Gautam Vaghela, one of the most gifted textile designers of the Weavers' Centre has conceived a series of wall hangings using brush and block to produce dyed cloths of splendour. Flowers, birds and trees create the landscape, Sensitive shading and rich juxtaposition of colours have resulted in the creation of masterly products that rank amongst the finest examples of textile crafts in this country.

—PUPUL JAYAKAR

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3. *Cotton painting and printing in the Madras Presidency*, W. S. Hadaway.

A contemporary Palampore hand-printed on silk from the atelier of the Weavers' Design Centre, Bombay. Specially printed on to a raw silk mogha, this beautiful hanging silk cloth is in the collection of Lady Thomson and is exhibited by her in the residence of the United Kingdom High Commissioner in New Delhi, by whose courtesy it is here reproduced.

A contemporary hanging hand-block-painted on raw silk mogha to special order by the Weavers' Design Centre, Bombay. It displays a vast profusion of flowers and leaves, amongst which gay and colourful birds of paradise, and long-tailed parakeets besport.
Courtesy: Lady Thomson.

Spring Feeling:
The Vasanta Vilasa (three vignettes)

A poem in old Gujarati, the *Vasanta Vilasa* is the celebration of the coming of spring and the end of the long, dark winter. The days and nights are now equal in length and the warmth makes trees put forth new shoots and flowers. The air is heavy with fragrance, bees hover promiscuously and a bird calls to its mate. It is the season when youthful hearts are stirred with passion and longing for the beloved.

The theme was dear to Gujarati poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Their compositions revolved around imagery that immediately summoned visions of spring—the scented mango blossoms and the strident cry of the *kokila.* Often the poets used the metaphor of the humming bee as it flits from flower to flower to make veiled reproaches to inconstant lovers. One of the verses of the *Vasanta Vilasa* says: 'Infatuated you are with the desire for the splendour of the *bakula,* but is it right on that account, O king bee, that you should forget the delicate *malati* which is without its former glory?' The poems dwell also on the plight of the beloved who finds no solace in the cooling rays of the moon, so consumed is she by the pain of separation from her absent lover. At other times the poet describes the unbearable joy of the beloved as she hears the cawing of the crow announcing the early return of her lover and thereby singalling the end of her loneliness.

Poems treating this subject constituted a genre known as *phagu*—a word derived from *phalgu* and its associations with the annual festival of Holi when the vernal equinox is at hand. These *phagus* were, presumably, sung and were often replete with erotic undertones. They seem to have had special appeal for the wealthy, as well as the cultivated, sophisticated men-about-town *(nagarika)* and the women they associated with—their wives and the refined, accomplished courtesans. For their delectation some of the manuscripts carried miniatures that acted as pictorial counterparts of the written verse.

An illustrated copy, of the *Vasanta Vilasa* survives in the form of a scroll on cloth. Its colophon informs us that it was commissioned by Shah Shri Chandrapala, son of Shah Shri Depala in the year Vikram Samvat 1508 (A.D. 1451-1452) at Ahmedabad during the reign of Kutabadina (Qutb-ud-Din) son of Ahmed Shah.

To indulge his literary, aesthetic and erotic tastes the patron must, according to the prevailing custom of the time, have either obtained an earlier copy of the text in the imitation of which to make his own copy or employed a man of letters to assemble the verses. Thereafter he must have engaged a scribe to copy the written matter on the cloth scroll and later an artist to embellish it with pictures in the spaces left for that purpose by the copyist.

This scroll unfolds vertically and contained originally 84 painted panels of which the first 5 are now lost. The paintings do not always specifically illustrate the verse but are of a more general nature representing the eternal theme of spring and love as being inseparable. In this respect the miniatures seem to echo the sentiment proclaimed by Kalidasa in his *Ritu-Samhara*—the Cycle of Seasons—that spring is the loveliest of all seasons where young nature inspires young love to its fullest expression. The illustrations usually depict the lovers with their companions in wooded groves revelling in the glories of nature in springtime. Sometimes the scene shifts to the interior of the pavilion where the lovers frequently engage in the sensual and physical aspects of love.

The miniatures in this scroll are executed in the Western Indian Style of Painting. This style—with its insistence on line and preference for angular form—also known as the linear tradition, makes itself felt first in the fifth century frescoes at Ajanta where it exists side by side with the

earlier more naturalistic execution. Over the next few hundred years the linear tradition gained strength and in the eleventh century ceiling paintings in the magnificent Kailasanatha temple at Ellora it established itself fully, its most distinctive feature being wiry figures with faces characterised by the farther protruding eye.

In miniature painting the style makes its appearance in the eleventh century A.D. in documents painted in Western India, more particularly Gujarat. Initially, the style was esoteric in its approach and confined itself to portrayals of the auspicious lotus rhizome or representations of divinities and monks. Much later, sometime in the middle of the twelfth century, the style widens its scope to include the narrative element as well as descriptive details of landscape and architecture in its miniatures.

In the fourteenth century, the Western Indian Style assumes a more polished expression, its line is assured, the execution refined and the palette variegated with a judicious use of gold and silver. Around the middle of the fourteenth century despite its rich and complex appearance, the stylistic expression becomes superficial; there are definite signs of lessened vitality in the cluttered compositions and metallic colour-schemes.

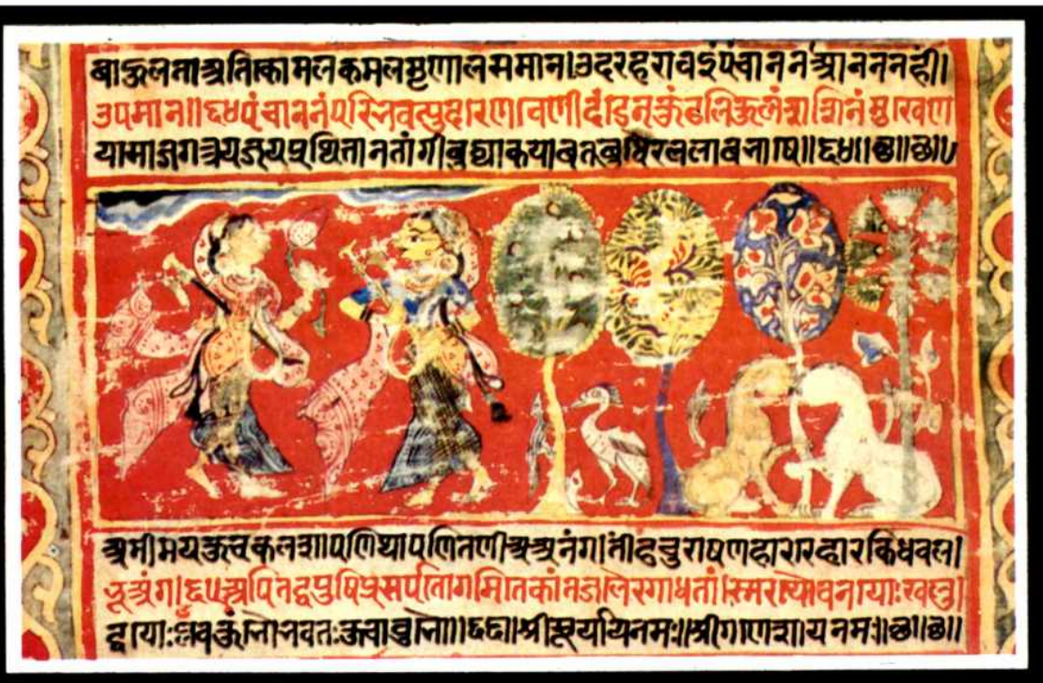
The *Vasanta Vilasa* executed in A.D. 1451, though a secular document, conforms to the stylistic tenets operating at that time in Jain manuscripts. This is not surprising, because whether it was a Hindu manuscript, a Jain document or a secular treatise, the style of painting employed was the same for all; the difference lay only in the subject matter, the technique was common to all.

In the *Vasanta Vilasa,* the compositions usually adhere to certain set solutions, only occasionally making interesting departures in the arrangement of figures. The palette is in keeping with what we see in other manuscripts painted concurrently in Gujarat. It uses either a rather restricted colour-scheme with red background or the red-blue-gold colour-scheme. Even so, the style of the *Vasanta Vilasa* is imbued with freshness and charm. Its figures, seated in wooded groves or enjoying the giddy pleasures of a swing or making passionate love in a pavilion, are pert and vivacious. The style pays greater attention to the depiction of landscape, particularly in the type and variety of trees. Some of the panels with colour-schemes using yellow background and little gold are new and unusual. Much of this freedom in pictorial expression may stem from the theme and the fact that its content is secular and not hieratic as in Jain manuscripts, but not all of it, for, the style is as yet unaffected by the exaggerations and mechanical processes that set in later in the century.

Though working within a conventional framework the *Vasanta Vilasa,* with its trees, creepers, birds and bees is able to underline the affinity that exists between youth and nature during *Vasanta* or spring season. It succeeds in projecting the spirit of the poem at a time when the style of painting was conservative and reluctant to experiment with new ideas. The *Vasanta-Vilasa* is also important as one of the very few documents painted in Gujarat during the fifteenth century which were secular and not religious in intent.

— SARYU DOSHI

The Vasanta Vilasa *manuscript with miniature paintings on cloth is one of the few gay books in Western Indian Painting. The poem deals with the feelings aroused by spring in the hearts of lovers when everything in nature blooms and inspires thoughts of love.*
Collection: Freer Art Gallery. Washington, U.S.A.



Painted Banners on Cloth:
Vividha-tirtha-pata of Ahmedabad

The antiquity of *paṭa-chitra*, cloth painting, in India goes back to at least eighth century as is evidenced from the *Kuvalaya-māta*[1], a Prakrit text, composed by Uddyotana Suri, in A.D. 778-779 at Jabalipura (Jabor) in Rajasthan. This is a treasure house showing cultural life of the people of the eighth century in which chapter 29 is devoted to the description of an elaborate cloth painting, a scroll, called the *Samsār-chakra-paṭa*. The *paṭa* depicts miseries, inequalities, futilities of human life, condition of lower animals and insects as well as heavenly beings. Despite poetic fancies and exaggerations it is apparent that such *paṭa-chitras* were in vogue in ancient India. Bhānu, the painter of this *paṭa* was the prince of King Sinha, of the city of Dwarka, situated in the ancient *Lāṭa-deśa*.

Subsequent research by scholars in this field of painting brought out a number of dated cloth paintings from Western India, Gujarat, Rajasthan and also from Nepal and Tibet. In Western India, Jaina painting depicting mainly mythological and religious subject matter was popular but a few secular scrolls are known. For example, the book of *Triśasthi śalākā puruśa charitra*[2] was written on cloth in A.D. 1351. The Champaner *Pañchatīrthi paṭa* of A.D. 1433,[3] *samavasaraṇa paṭas*[4], cosmological charts, maps of Jambudwipa, various *mantras* and *yantras* and other *paṭas* published from time to time denote the popularity and existence of cloth painting from the fourteenth century right upto the *Vijnaptipatras* of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Among the non-Jain and secular scrolls known, the *Vasanta Vilasa*[5] scroll, painted at Ahmedabad in A.D. 1451 and its comparable piece, the *Jayatra Yantra* of A.D. 1447,[6] now preserved in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, have an intrinsic value as they deviate greatly from the stereo-typed, hieratic Jain tradition and become free to an extent to give a new direction to the Western Indian traditional painting.

Continuity of cloth paintings can be observed in the *Vijnyptipatras* or the letters of invitation, from the 17th century onwards. The important among them is the one, painted by Ustad Salivahana in the year A.D. 1610[7] in the so-called popular Mughal style. Later on, this tradition was prevalent in Rajasthan and a number of *Vijnyptipatras*[8] from Sirohi and other places are known.

Intended for common worship in a temple or in the house, these *paṭas* are invariably displayed in temples of *Upaśrayas* during the *Paryusana*, an auspicious period which falls in the *Ganeśa chaturthi* month or during the *chāturmāsa*. The concept of the *tīrthipaṭa* is old and the usual format of such *paṭas* is either square or rectangular with four *tīrthas* located on four corners and the centre, being occupied by a seated *Tīrthankara* or the *Samavasaraṇa*[9]. Being limited by space the artist always resorted to symbolic representation of the *tīrthas* and filled the remaining spaces with Jain auspicious signs and on some occasions with scenes from the daily life. This elaborate system of sacred symbols and iconographic types of *Vidyādevis*, *Yakshas*, seated monks, *śravakas* and donors was known to the Western Indian artist, but there is little aesthetic significance in them, and they often played a part of over-decorative patterns and what are usually called as space fillers.

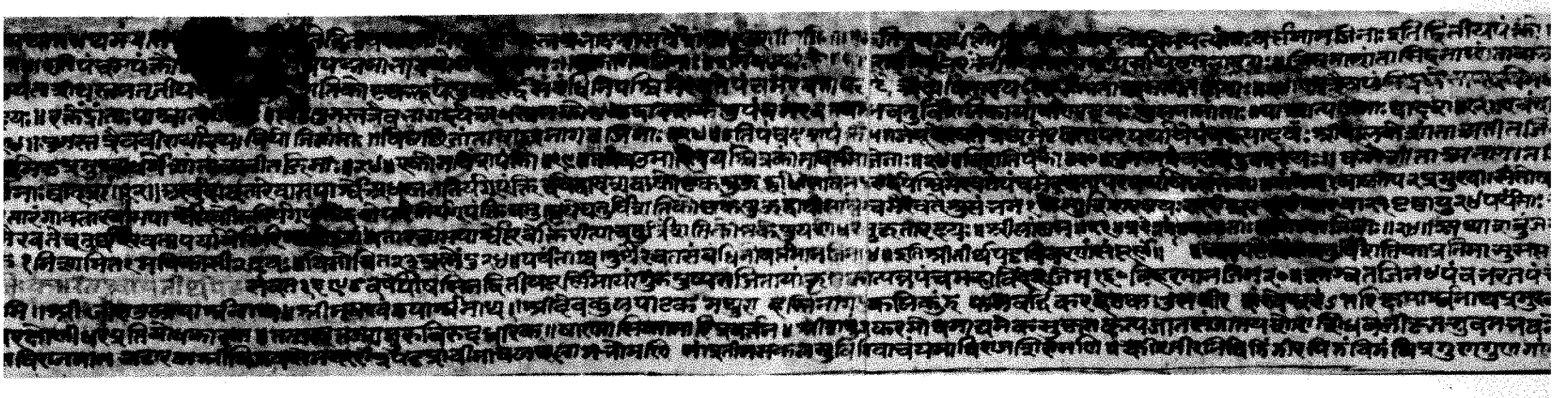
Fig. 1 The *paṭa* in question identified by Dr. U. P. Shah as a *Vividha-tīrtha-Vastrapaṭa* is a later example of the *pañchatīrthi paṭa* which positively has an ancestry to the earlier, stylized and symbolic *paṭas*. With the change in political and social conditions in the middle of the seventeenth century in Rajasthan and Gujarat, the picture presented by the artist is interesting where Mughal conventions of dress types and pageantry are obvious in some passages of this *paṭa*.

This banner-like vertical *paṭa* measures 320 x 120 cms. including a floral border. Due to its poor condition of preservation it was sent to Dr. Moti Chandra at the Prince of Wales Museum,

1. Vividha-tirtha-vastra-paṭa of Ahmedabad, A.D. 1641. ►
Collection: Samvegi Upaśraya, Ahmedabad

The *paṭa* has been divided horizontally into four registers. In the first register is the colophon on top; below which are seated jinas arranged in a pyramidal shape giving it a form of a *sikhara*. Above the jinas is a stepped arrangement of numerical calculations in white. Remaining spaces on both sides of the pyramidal arrangement are filled with temples, trees and various other chants and symbols.

Fig. 3 In the second register are represented two *tirthas*, vertically flanked by six rows of seated jinas in rectangles and *vidyadevis*. The upper half of the painting is occupied by Satrunjaya *tirtha* having an elaborate temple complex, with a row of *sikharas* in white, three shrines, a courtyard and then the outer wall of the temple with an entrance. The *par kota* is arranged in a zig-zag manner. The entrance has a descending flight of steps leading to the outer gate of the second fortification wall. In this complex the first principal temple enshrines



Ādinātha i.e. *Ṛṣabhanātha*, attended by two worshippers. To the left is the shrine of *Sahasra-kota*, which appears to be a *pañchatīrthi*.

To the right is Indra enshrined and mounted on a white elephant. To the right of this is a shrine of *Rāyanapaglā*. In the courtyard in front can be seen women holding flower garlands, men selling flowers. Immediately above the first entrance can be seen a cobra and a peacock which have been associated with the temple of *Rāyanapaglā*. Here, this shrine is labelled as *Sahasra pagalā* enshring a number of *pādukās*.

To the left of the steps are two *Kuṇḍas*, tanks, and a seated tiger. One of them may be interpreted as *Surya Kunda* and the small white temples may be of *Vasupujya Swāmi* which exist even today. To the right of the steps is the temple of *Ṛṣabhadeva* and another shrine, where five Pandavas and Draupadi can be seen. According to Jain literature, Pandavas with their wife Draupadi and Kunti, along with many monks had attained salvation on Satrunjaya. This episode is often represented while depicting Satrunjaya *tirtha*.

In the foreground is the foothill of Satrunjaya represented by a small temple on the left and houses. In front can be seen an octagonal (partly seen) lake with lotus flowers. This may be the *Lalitasarōvara* built by Vastupala-Tejapala on the foothills of Satrunjaya. To the right are parked bullock carts, the vehicles of the pilgrims.

Fig. 4 The lower half separated by a line cutting the *Lalitasarōvara*, is unidentifiable, though it may be the depiction of the *tirtha* of Girnargarh. In the foreground can be seen the city and the palace complex. A big procession with elephants, horses and a chariot is approaching from the left in which a palanquin is also visible partially. In the centre is the hill with winding road, Siva temples, caves, men trekking their way and finally on the top is the temple

of a deity. On the right is a boat approaching while on the left can be seen few horse riders approaching with attendants. In the absence of any main deity on this mound, the attribution can be conjectural though the text in the colophon mentions the Girnargarh as one of the *tirthas*.

Then follows the third register showing seated *Tirthankaras, jinas* and *Vidyadevis* and *Navagrahas* (see Fig. 1). The area is divided into small rectangles like a chessboard and is filled with jinas in their respective colours. Last three rows of this register have figures of seated jinas, the *aśtamangalas*, charts and other figures.

In the fourth register, which is separated from the rest by a floral border, there appears to be a congregation of several *tirthas*. This area is completely filled up irrespective of its compositional value or aesthetic beauty.

To the extreme left is a temple with five circular domes enshrining a *chovisi*, i.e. twenty-four *Tirthankaras:* the fourteen dreams and twelve pairs of *padukas* (sandals). Below, can be seen some *sadhus* or pilgrims resting among the hills and some ascending. To their right is a stylized representation of the coronation of *Mahāvira* in three stages. In the bottom left corner there are two temple complexes enshrining the *Tirthankaras*, which are difficult to identify. Top right is a mountainous region with elephant riders and a shrine of *Neminatha* below it, which may be identified as the *tirtha* of Arbhutadeva,i.e. Abu. To its right may be the depiction of Tarangagarh having the shrines of Siva linga and a Nandi.

Dr. U. P. Shah has published in his recent publication, *Treasures of Jain Bhandars*, brought out by the L.D. Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad, a number of dated *paṭas* and illustrated material. Among them are two *paṭas* painted at Ahmedabad in A.D. 1641, the other labelled as *paṭa* representing 904 jinas or *Vividha-Tirtha Vastra paṭa*,[11] is more profusely labelled than the one discussed above.

Both these *paṭas* have thrown a flood of light on the painting at Ahmedabad in the middle of the seventeenth century. A detailed work on these cloth paintings may help scholars in future.

I am thankful to the Samvegi Upaśraya, Ahmedabad, and Seth Anandji Kalyanji Pedhi, Ahmedabad, for allowing me to publish the *pata.*

—SHRIDHAR ANDHARE

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The Pancha-Kalyanaka Pata

Visually, one of the most striking examples of Indian Miniature Painting is a scroll on cloth, portraying the PANCHA-KALYANAKA of Rsabha or Adinatha, the first of the twenty-four Jain Tirthankaras.

The term PANCHA-KALYANAKA signifies the five auspicious events that take place in the life of every Tirthankara.

They are:

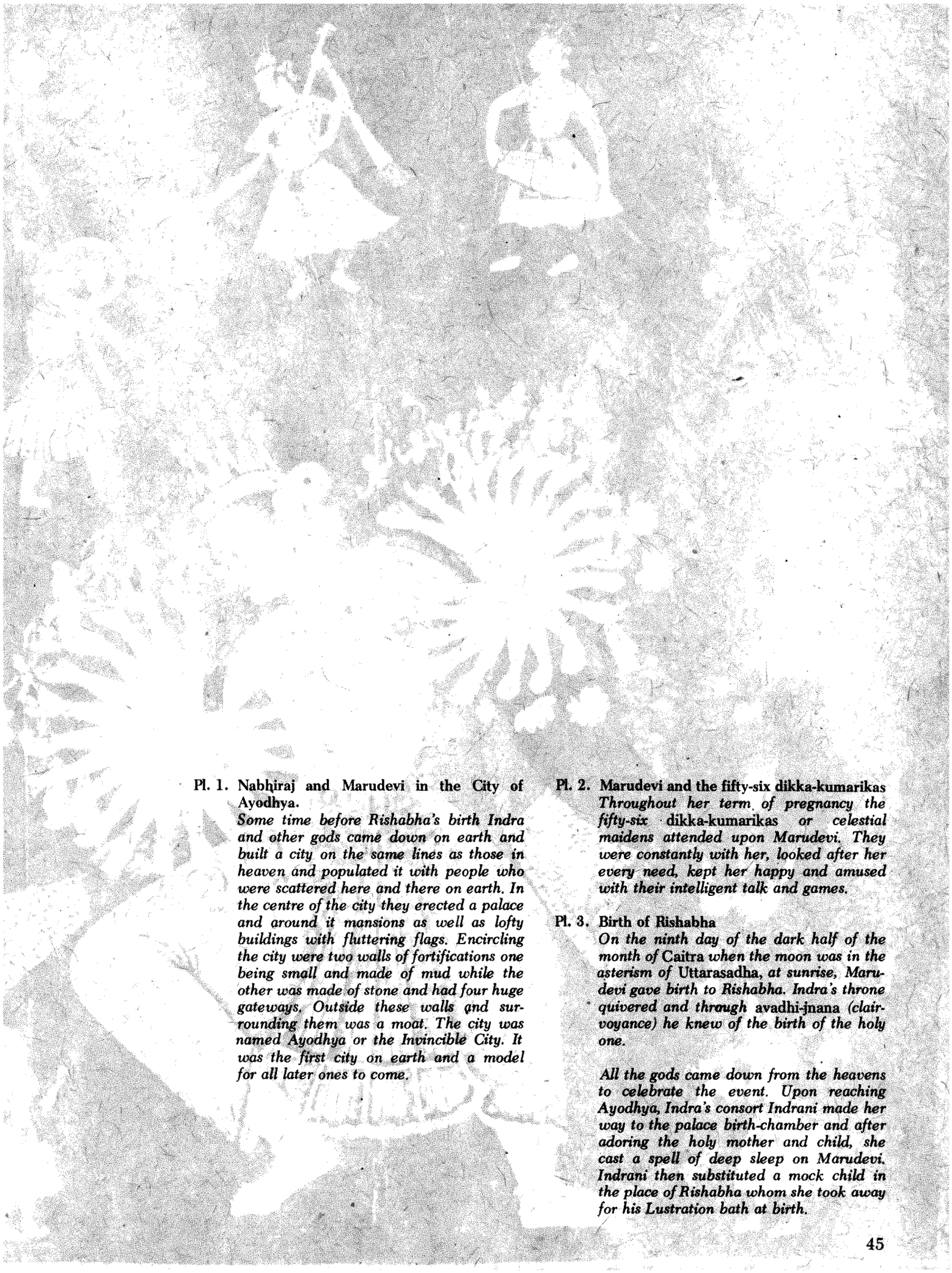
GARBHA ; descent on earth as human embryo.
JANMA ; birth
DIKSHA ; renunciation.
KEVALJNANA ; attainment of all knowledge.
MOKSHA ; release from the cycle of rebirth

This magnificent PATA envisaged on a grand scale - forty feet long and three feet wide is fully illustrated.

It is divided into Sixteen panels and unrolls from the left to right.

Painted in an intriguing combination of the Rajasthani, Deccani and Mughal KALAMS c. A. D. 1700. this scroll reflects the fusion of cultures and sensibilities that occurred in Aurangabad during the seventeenth century when the Mughal Emperor and his Rajput generals marched to the southerly regions to conquer the Deccani Kingdoms.

– SARYU DOSHI



Pl. 1. Nabhiraj and Marudevi in the City of Ayodhya.
Some time before Rishabha's birth Indra and other gods came down on earth and built a city on the same lines as those in heaven and populated it with people who were scattered here and there on earth. In the centre of the city they erected a palace and around it mansions as well as lofty buildings with fluttering flags. Encircling the city were two walls of fortifications one being small and made of mud while the other was made of stone and had four huge gateways. Outside these walls and surrounding them was a moat. The city was named Ayodhya or the Invincible City. It was the first city on earth and a model for all later ones to come.

Pl. 2. Marudevi and the fifty-six dikka-kumarikas
Throughout her term of pregnancy the fifty-six dikka-kumarikas *or celestial maidens attended upon Marudevi. They were constantly with her, looked after her every need, kept her happy and amused with their intelligent talk and games.*

Pl. 3. Birth of Rishabha
On the ninth day of the dark half of the month of Caitra *when the moon was in the asterism of* Uttarasadha, *at sunrise, Marudevi gave birth to Rishabha. Indra's throne quivered and through* avadhi-jnana *(clairvoyance) he knew of the birth of the holy one.*

All the gods came down from the heavens to celebrate the event. Upon reaching Ayodhya, Indra's consort Indrani made her way to the palace birth-chamber and after adoring the holy mother and child, she cast a spell of deep sleep on Marudevi. Indrani then substituted a mock child in the place of Rishabha whom she took away for his Lustration bath at birth.

Pl. 4. Rishabha's Lustration on Mount Meru

Indra seated himself on the elephant Airavata with infant Tirthankara in his lap. Then the procession comprising various gods and members of the different contingents of the Indrasena — some dancing, some singing — moved with shouts of jaya, jaya *towards Mount Meru.*

When it came to Mount Meru, the procession circumambulated it and wound its way to the top to the region of pandukavana. *There Indra conducted the Lustration rites with waters brought from the Ocean of Milk by gods who formed a chain from the base of Mount Meru to its top. They filled pitchers with waters from the Ocean of Milk and passed them from hand to hand to Indra who performed the anointation ceremony.*

Pl. 5. Procession returning from Mount Meru to Ayodhya

The procession returned as it had come. It was a magnificent sight. Above and around the elephant Airavata the gods were seated in their celestial palanquins and riding their bird or animal vehicles. Airavata himself looked splendid; on each of his eight tusks were lotus lakes and on each of the lotuses a dancing or singing apsara.

Pl. 6. Dancing Indra

On reaching Ayodhya, Indra returned the holy child to its parents and there were renewed rejoicings at the happy event. Inspired by the jubilation, Indra began to dance. The gandharvas *gathered around him and provided the musical accompaniment. While dancing, Indra kept changing his form — from small to large and at times seeming to be in near proximity, while at other times far away in the distance. On his many arms were swirling and twirling* apsaras.

Pl. 7. Rishabha's Renunciation

And so the days passed with Rishabha fulfilling his royal duties and enjoying his good fortune. The time had come, Indra felt, to call Rishabha's attention to his mission on earth — of propagating the Jain faith. He decided to do so through the celestial dancer Nilanjana whose life was going to end very shortly. As she danced in Rishabha's court and while everyone was admiring her swift and serpent-like movements her life ended, she staggered, fell dead and disappeared. Immediately, Indra created another dancer in her place and the performance continued uninterruptedly.

The event, however, disturbed Rishabha deeply. He began to muse upon the ephemeral nature of life and the useless striving of the soul caught in the Cycle of Rebirths. His reflections made him want to abandon worldly pleasures and become an ascetic. But prior to withdrawing from his duties as householder, Rishabha appointed son Bharata as king and son Bahubali as the next in command.

At this time the gods came down from above and prepared Rishabha for his renunciation. They bathed him and dressed him in costly clothes and jewels and carried him in a palanquin to the Sidharthaka woods. There, Rishabha divested himself of his clothing and jewellery and seated himself upon a stone under a banyan tree. Facing east, he pulled out his hair in five handfuls which Indra received in a gem-studded casket and later cast in the Ocean of Milk.

Pl. 8. The Samavasarana

When Rishabha, after all his austerities, obtained Kevala-jnàna, Indra and other gods came down on earth and built the samavasarana *or the audience-hall where all sentient creatures could hear the Omniscient One preach.*

The Samavasarana, *made of blue gems, was circular in plan with an outer wall, three concentric enclosures and four radial pathways. The outer wall of the* Samavasarana *was made of many-hued crushed gems. Inside it, and encircled by it were the region of sparkling waters and wooded bowers. Then came the first enclosure made of gleaming gold and inside which was the region of flags. Encircled by this region was the second enclosure made of silver and its region of mansions. At a slight distance was the third and last enclosure made of crystal. Inside was the* Shri-mandapa *or the covered area where all creatures from the three worlds could assemble to hear Rishabha. In the centre of the* Shri-mandapa *in an open space was a pavilion in which sat Rishabha appearing to face all four sides of the* Samavasarana *(as if he had a four-headed body). And when he spoke, it was like the roar of the ocean, no words were articulated but his message was clear. Like the rays of the sun that dispel darkness, the sounds emanating from the Tirthankara removed ignorance illumining the minds of all who heard him.*

Plates 1 — 8.

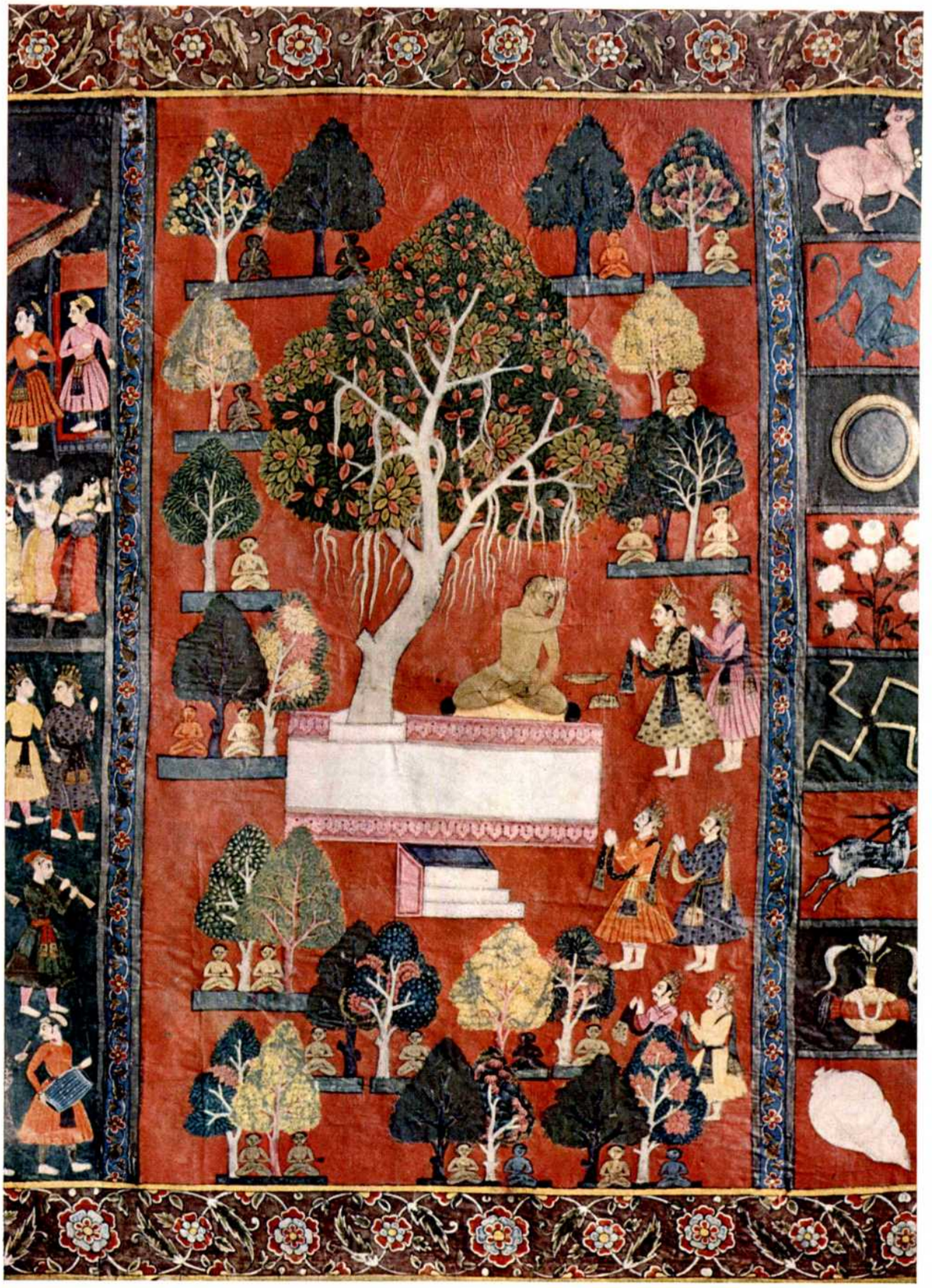
Scroll. Collection: Sena Gana Mandir of the Digambara Jains, Karanja, Vidarbha, Maharashtra

Pl. 1. *Nabhiraj and Marudevi in the City of Ayodhya*

Pl. 4. *Rishabha's Lustration on Mount Meru*

Pl. 3. *Birth of Rishabha*

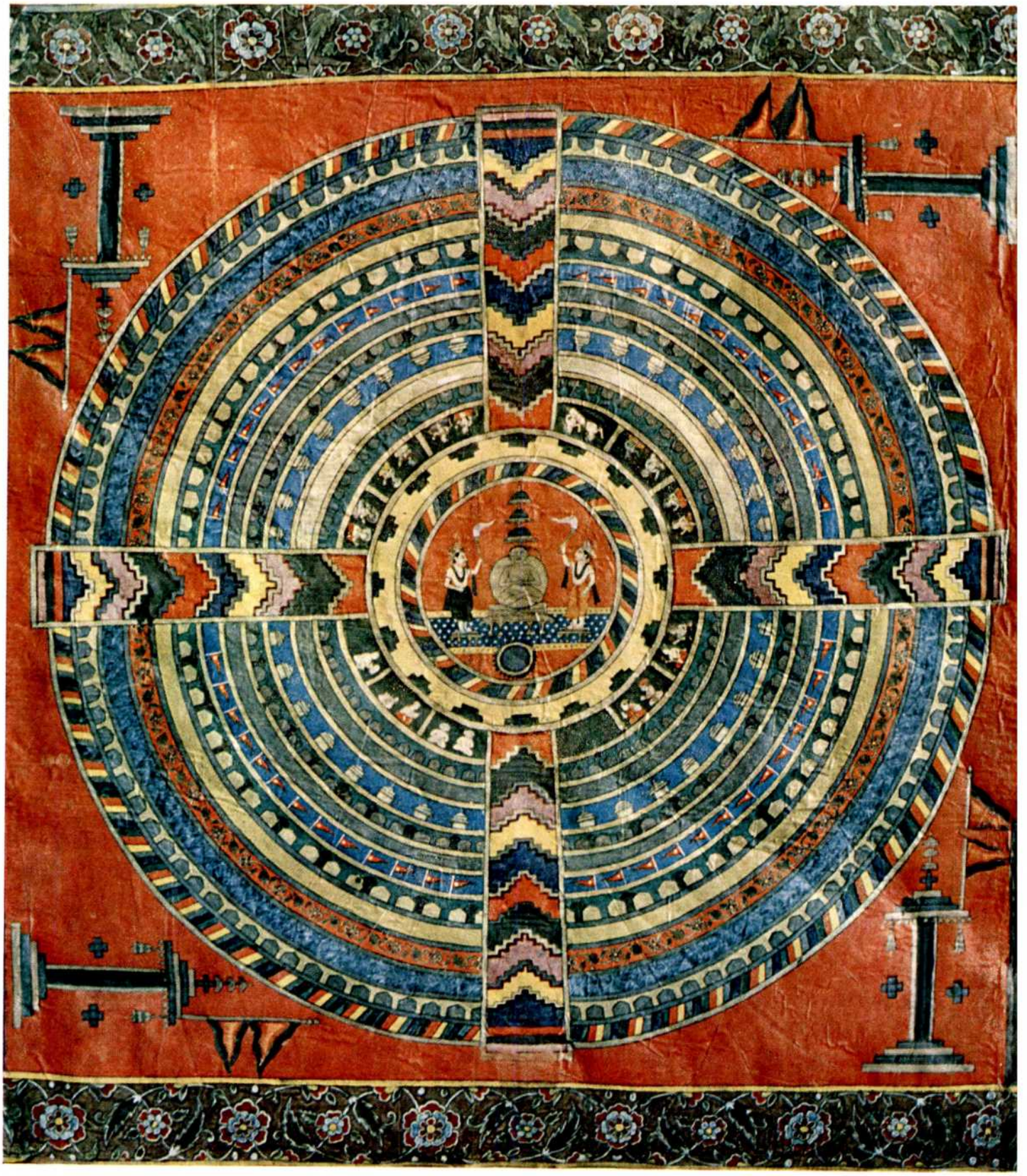
Pl. 2. *Marùdevi and the fifty-six dikka-kumarikas*



Pl. 7. *Rishabha's Renunciation*

Pl. 6. *Dancing Indra*

Pl. 5. *Procession returning from Mount Meru to Ayodhya*



Pl. 8. *The Samavasarana*

Dazzling to the Eye:
Pichhavais from the Deccan

Three hundred years ago, on the sands of dry river beds, Golconda craftsmen traced designs on cloth in colours "dazzling to the eye." These remarkable cloth-pieces, veritable poems in lines and rich hues of red, blue and green were made for the Sultans and Emperors of India, to decorate their tents and palaces. The fame of these textiles had already spread far and wide: the Great Majore and Persian took "great affection to these fine paintings and delighted therein" while from Europe came the *Phirangis* to trade in them[1].

Generations of craftsmen carried on the tradition, making fancy cloths for fastidious Persians side by side with ordinary *chadars* for the common Indian folk.[2] Amongst such work was created, a little over a century ago an exquisite temple-hanging.[3]

Fig. 1 Small in size and delicately designed, this piece portrays a large symmetrical rocky mound of serrated crags overgrown with trees and blossoming plants, and teeming with birds and beasts. From its summit grows a tree, in the flowering branches of which sit birds of exotic plumage. It is the tree of life and on either side of it stand four women offering worship: the first carries an *arati* (a salver of lighted lamps), the second a fan, the third a *chauri* and the fourth a *morchhal*. Above this scene is a horizontal narrow panel depicting a dense forest populated with birds and all kinds of wild animals. On all four sides of the hanging is a border featuring an undulating floral scroll.

The workmanship of this hanging is an example of the laborious and intricate process practised in the Masulipatam region on the Golconda sea-board. It consists of a technique employing a combination of two different methods: that of printing with finely-cut wood-blocks and hand painting or *kalamkari* work. The result, as we can see, is extraordinarily attractive.

Like the technique, the style of the hanging is in keeping with other works from Masulipatam. Its white unpainted cloth base, the luminous colours and gold-dusted outlines, as also the gracefully contrived pattern of curving stems, leaves and flowers interspersed with various motifs are features that can be associated with the mature phase of the style at this centre *c.* mid eighteenth century[4].

Although the decorative qualities of the hanging are very striking, its ritualistic character is unmistakably conveyed by the figures of worshipping women. The fact that this hanging resembles a *pichhavai* (backdrop to an image) and that the worshipping women are attired in Rajasthani garb suggests that the hanging is connected with the Krishna cult—probably that of *Pushti-Marg* expounded by Vallabhacharya[5].

The Vallabha *Sampradaya* was founded in the early years of the sixteenth century at Govardhan near Mathura. It offers to its followers a religious system which has successfully effected a harmony between abstract philosophical speculations and the more concrete feelings of love towards Krishna as a personal deity, and through him to Krishna, the Supreme Being. The sect worships Krishna in seven principal forms including Shri-Vitthalanathji (Vithoba of Pandharpur) and Shri-Madanamohanji and two subsidiary forms, one of which is *Shri-Navanitapriyaji.* But the one that occupies the central place in this religious thought is that of *Shri-Govardhanagiridhari* or Krishna raising Mt. Govardhana as an umbrella to protect his followers from the rainstorms unleashed by the fury of God Indra. This form of Krishna is commonly known as *Shri-Nathji.*

In the last decades of the seventeenth century, Aurangazeb's religious policies and persecution forced this sect to move its seat from Mathura. Legend tells us that the followers of the sect placed the holy icon of *Shri-Nathji* in a bullock-cart and proceeded southwards. After many days of travelling and when only a few miles away from Udaipur, their cart carrying the holy image became stuck in the earth and no amount of effort could dislodge it. This phenomenon was interpreted as a divine indication of the deity's desire to be enshrined there.

This place, where the image was re-instated, came to be known as Nathadwara or the gateway to *Shri-Nathji.* It serves as the headquarters of the cult.

Unlike other Hindu cult-images, that of *Shri-Nathji* is not housed in a temple but in a *haveli* or a palatial mansion where the priests live and continually do *seva* (service), the elaborate ritual of which symbolises the devotional character of the cult. The *seva* follows a more or less set daily pattern: the image is bathed, enrobed, offered varieties of food, entertained with music and at night put to rest. This ritual is modified in conformity with the festivals that occur throughout the year. The chief purpose of the whole routine is to recreate the land of Braj and re-enact Krishna's *lilas* so that the worshippers can partake of the Lord's eternal bliss. The room where the icon is kept is decorated with a *pichhavai* or a hanging behind the image and covering for the stepped platform in front of the image. Occasionally a ceiling canopy is also employed. All these cloths are designed as a set and have a common theme. The *Pichhavai* is either made of plain cloths or rich brocades, or embroidered or pigment-painted pieces. Many of the pigment painted *pichhavais* are specially designed for festivals such as *sarad-purnima* or *gopa-ashtami* celebrated by the cult.[6]

The adherents of the Vallabha sect are found in north India chiefly in Gujarat and Rajasthan. In the Deccan and south India the cult seems to have had no following until the mid seventeenth century when a few families of northern origin made their way to Hyderabad. The more influential of these are from Gujarat and trace the beginnings of their migration to the days of the Mughal campaigns in the Deccan. According to them, their forefathers ventured out of their hometowns in Gujarat seeking better opportunities in business and found them in Burhanpur. In this provincial capital of the Mughal Empire, as retailers of grains and provisions, they prospered from the lucrative trade provided by the constant passage of Mughal troops to and from the Deccan. Gradually, these families moved south setting up new outlets along the Mughal route to Golconda and eventually settling there. Other Gujarati families with religious affiliations to the *Shri-Nathji* cult say that the lure of Golconda diamonds drew their ancestors to this region. Jewellers by profession, they came to deal in this precious commodity and stayed in Golconda; and the decendants of these families still carry on the business.

Some of the affluent families of Gujarati origin in the Deccan maintain household shrines where worship is performed in strict accordance with the rules of the cult. Being private shrines, their scale is smaller and more intimate than that of the *havelis*, and their accessories perhaps more luxurious. Our small *pichhavai* was, in all likelihood, specially ordered from Masulipatam to decorate such a shrine.

A much larger *pichhavai* intended undoubtedly for use in a temple rather than a household shrine is identical in theme and iconography to the one from Masulipatam. It depicts a huge flowering tree, on either side of which stand two women, one holding a *morchhal* and the other a fan. The tree grows out of a rocky protuberance and spreads above the figures, its luxuriant foliage swarming with parrots, peacocks and other birds including a turkey-cock. Monkeys sit in it nibbling fruit while squirrels clamber up its trunk, run along the branches and leap among the leaves and flowers. Below this panel are two horizontal bands: the upper showing a small tree in the centre on either side of which are three cows and a fluting cowherd, and the lower representing a river with aquatic flora and fauna. On all four sides, the scroll is bound by a border containing creeper with full-blown flowers. In technique this hanging differs slightly from the preceding one. While it continues the tradition of hand-painting it uses stencils instead of print-blocks for motifs that are to be repeated—like *gopis, gopas* and cows.

Stylistically, this hanging reveals points of similarity in the direction of Deccan rather than Gujarat to which it has hitherto been assigned[7]. The Deccani affiliations are clearly visible

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1. *Temple hanging, Nal Daman. Masulipatam. c. mid eighteenth century. (Collection: Prince of Wales Museum).*
2. *Detail of Temple hanging in black and gold. c. eighteenth century. (Private collection).*
3. *Detail of Fig. 1.*

in the delineation of rocks and the use of predilection for the tree of life motif[8] as well as the shaded flowers[9]. These decorative devices appear to have been inherited directly from the cloth painting tradition at Golconda while the ample-hipped forms of the women seem to have stepped out of the tradition of miniature painting in the Deccan.

Within the Deccan the provenance of this hanging can be narrowed down to Burhanpur for two reasons. Firstly, Burhanpur had a reputation of being a centre of cotton-painting[10]. As early as Akbar's time it was described as "a large city with many gardens . . . inhabited by people of all nations and abounding with handicraftsmen". A little later, in a letter sent to London in A.D. 1605, an English East India Company Agent mentions that the finest quilts and hangings "are brought from Brampore some eight days journey to this place (Surat)." This noted tradition seems to have continued without serious damage in the years of political turmoil that followed. In the late eighteenth century with the development of printing techniques in Europe the export trade in cotton hangings dwindled, but internal demand continued and high technical standards were maintained. Then, with the rapid rise of Bombay as a centre of hand-printed goods, in the mid nineteenth century the earlier traditions at places like Burhanpur were extinguished. Secondly, Burhanpur was a place where Hindu temple-hangings, particularly that of the Krishna cult, were produced[11]. Interestingly enough, these works, like our hanging, reveal a style which contains elements from regions as far apart from each other as Gujarat and the southern provinces, though the influence from the latter source is more pronounced. That such a thing should occur is not surprising in view of Burhanpur's geographical position in north Deccan as well as the fact that it was situated on the high road from the north to the south. It became a place where cultural currents from both areas streamed in and were synthesised in one coherent style. Burhanpur then, seems to be the place where our temple-hanging was made *c.* early nineteenth century.

More spectacular and striking than either the Masulipatam or the Burhanpur hangings are those painted in gold over a deep maroon, blud-black or black ground[12].

A study of these hangings reveals that the tree of life motif plays a prominent part in their iconography. A striking example of this group is a *pichhavai* featuring the *Gopa-ashtami* theme and depicting cows gathered on both sides of the central tree[13]. This is indeed a rare piece, for generally these *pichhavais* depict the tree of life motif with *gopis* on either side of it, a row of
Fig. 2 cows below and the river Jamna flowing underneath. In some, the tree of life is missing[14] while in others it is replaced by the figure of fluting Krishna. This substitution would indicate that the tree of life motif symbolises Krishna[15] and makes us wonder if the thought processes behind the iconography here were similar to those of Hinayana Buddhism which preferred not to show Buddha in his anthropomorphic form. If there is any truth in this premise then those hangings portraying Krishna should be later in date.

Rather different from the other *pichhavais* in this "gold-group" is an example wherein the entire area is divided into small panels each containing figures of two *gopis*[16] facing one another. Also unsual in its iconography and colour-scheme is an apparently late example which depicts a mansion (symbolic of the *haveli*?) instead of the tree of life motif. On either side of the white mansion are *gopis* painted in gleaming gold against an emerald green ground.

The mystery of where this dark and beautiful group was painted continues to haunt the art historian, but since they are related to the Masulipatam and Burhanpur hangings in their theme and iconography it would seem that we are not far from the truth in attributing them to the Deccan. The sensuously drawn voluptuous women and the predilection for gold are again both suggestive of tradition of painting prevalent in this region.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century when these *pichhavais* seem to have been executed, miniature paintings were produced in Hyderabad and presumably also at Aurangabad. The undefinable "Rajasthani feeling" that permeates these hangings would favour the provenance at Aurangabad, for, at that centre, in the preceding century, had grown up a tradition of Rajasthani painting.

The beginning of the Rajasthani style at Aurangabad lies in the first half of the sixteenth century when the Mughal Emperors were determined to subjugate the Deccan. The city of Aurangabad located in northern Deccan, served as an ideal base for planning strategies and directing troop movements. With the Mughal armies came numerous Rajput commanders and contingents of Rajput soldiers. Very often they were stationed there for prolonged period and this had the effect of Rajput manners themselves felt in the cultural scene of Aurangabad. In painting it resulted in the growth of an idiom which was Rajasthani in character but tempered with Mughal and Deccani elements[17]. Even after the wars were over and the triumphant armies with their Rajput generals withdrew, the style they had given rise to continued, receiving patronage from those Rajasthani and Gujarati people who had settled in the Deccan as well as the local aristocracy and nobility.

In these *pichhavais* we can recognise the regional Deccani factor in the style as well as the iconography. In the former the local influence is immediately evident in the rendering of figures as well as choice of colours while in the latter it can be observed in the constant use of the tree of life motif—a motif apparently evolved in Golconda and repeatedly used in its cloth-paintings. Again, when these *pichhavais* represent Krishna they show him as Krishna the flutist rather than Krishna *govardhana-giridhari* as in the Nathadwara *pichhavais*. This is not to say that the Nathadwara *pichhavais* never employ the figure of the fluting Krishna in their iconography. They do, but when they do so, it is usually in a specific context as in *pichhavais* depicting *Rasa* or the *Gopa-ashtami*. Inasmuch as the theme of these *pichhavais* is neither *rasa* nor *gopa-ashtami*, does the presence of fluting Krishna here suggest that the followers of this cult in the Deccan were devotees of *Shri-Gokulchandramaji*—the fluting Krishna, one of the principal images of Vallabha Sampradaya? Or is this form of Krishna a local trait arising out of a preference developed in that milieu and determining influences from sothern Krishna cults? All these and many more questions still await answers.

—SARYU DOSHI

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3. Coll: Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, Acc. No. 63.34 (See S. Andhare "A Tinsel printed Rumal: Deccani late 18th century," *P.O.W.M. Bulletin*, No. 11, pp. 66-68.)
4. *ibid*, No. 31.
5. R. Skelton, *Rajasthani Temple Hangings of the Krishna Cult*, 1973.
6. *ibid*, Figs. 7-10, 17.
7. J. Irwin & M. Hall, No. 68.
8. *ibid*, *cf* Pl. 46 to Pl. 15.
9. *ibid*, *cf* Pl. 46 to Pls. 16, 17.
10. *ibid*, pp. 24-5.
11. *ibid*, pp. 67-8.
12. R. Skelton, Pl. 2.
13. A. Coomaraswamy, "A Pastoral Paradise", *Rupam*, Nos. 42-44, 1930, p. 14.
14. R. Skelton, Pl. 2.
15. The interpretation that the *gopis* under a tree indicate their searching "the forest, asking each tree, flower and animal where they may find their Lord Krishna, who has hidden to tease them" (see J. Irwin & M. Hall p. 83) is not convincing.
16. Quite often single small pieces depicting two gopis facing one another are found. It remains to be determined whether they are individual pieces in their own right or are cut up fragments from a larger—probably a damaged—piece.
17. S. Doshi, "An Illustrated Manuscript from Aurangabad dated A.D. 1650", *Lalit Kala*, 15.

Mātāno Candarvo
Textile pieces for goddess worship in Gujarat

Ahmedabad is a fairly modernised, commercial capital of Gujarat with a population of c. 2 million inhabitants. It is one of the foremost centres of modern textile industry of the country. Much before the rise of modern textile industry, Ahmedabad had been a home of traditional textiles. Even today, in the old town of Ahmedabad are preserved several pockets of traditional textile printing and painting. In many such workshops, cotton fabrics are partly printed with wooden blocks and partly hand painted. Some traditional families of printers and painters specially prepare textile pieces with representations of mother goddesses. By using several such red, black and white textile pieces, a kind of enclosure is created around the shrine of a goddess under which the ceremony of invocation and appeasement of the goddess takes place.

These rectangular cotton textile pieces for the sacred enclosure are known as *mātāno candarvo*, the canopy for the goddess, or as *mātānī dhotī*, the garment for the goddess. Generally these pieces are bound by one or more ornate borders in black and red. In the centre of the field usually there is a figure of the main goddess and in the surrounding space several figures of men, animals and mythological characters. These pieces are printed by Vaghris, a former wandering community which has now become settled. These Vaghris live and practise their craft in a small lane near the central post office of Ahmedabad. The major part of printing and painting is done in the semi-open verandhas of their houses or in the open streets. Only the actual dyeing is done by Muslim craftsmen.

The various stages of procedure are age-old and complicated. After the terminology used by Professor Alfred Bühler we shall call it 'Türkischrot-Beizreserve-musterung' (turkish-red-corrosion-and-resist decoration). The cotton cloth which is purchased ready in rolls is first freed of its starch. For this it is soaked in a mixture of water and camel dung, and washed in the nearby river. After drying in the open sun on the bank of the river the cloth is again soaked in a mixture of salt and cow dung. This time it is boiled. After this the cloth is repeatedly rinsed in fresh water and finally soaked in water containing caustic soda and castor oil and left to dry. Later on the same cloth is dipped in another solution, this time a mixture of myrobalan, castor oil and water, till the cloth is evenly dull yellow and thus seasoned. The cloth prepared in this manner comes on the table of the printer who prints the motifs with comparatively large wooden blocks. Only those motifs which occur seldom twice on the same piece, especially the large central figures of the mother goddesses, are often not block-printed, but hand-painted. The black dye is kept in a box having a pad of cotton cloth (similar to that of a stamp pad). This dye is prepared by keeping for one week pieces of rusted iron in water containing sugar-mollasses and then by thickening the oxide-solution by the flour of tamarind-seeds. Most of the fillings and interstices are covered with a mixture of alum and starch which when dyed with alizarin and water produces a dark-red colour. For painting, the Vaghris use pieces of tooth sticks with one end chewed up so that the tuft of fibre can be employed as brush. The tooth sticks are cut from thin branches of *bāval* tree and are used traditionally as tooth brushes all over Gujarat. These are customarily sold for that purpose by a sub-group of the Vaghris. After the painted and printed pieces are dyed in alizarin at the boilers of Muslim dyers, the pieces are brought to the river again, where these are washed and bleached so that the extra dye is washed out and the yellow portions turn bright white.

The finished textile pieces are piled up inside the huts of the Vaghri workmen. A couple of these are hung as publicity posters tied between trees or lamp posts in front of their huts. Formerly all the pieces were bought by the local population for their ritual use, but today a large quantity is acquired by urban householders for household decorations. In the centre of the piece usually there is a representation of a goddess. She is shown seated on a throne and

holding in her multiple hands such emblems as dagger, sword, trident (weapons for killing demons), a bowl for drinking sacrificial blood, a *cauri*, etc. The goddess also wears a crown and is richly adorned with ornaments in her ears, arms, feet and neck. Sometimes there are tattoo designs on her cheeks and chin. Usually in front of her is depicted her priest leading a sacrificial animal towards her. Depending upon the nature of the goddess the animal is either a black he-goat, or a water-buffalo.The rest of the spaces of such textile pieces are filled with figures of Indian gods and goddesses who are benevolent enough to look after their worshippers. In the same spaces often there are narrative scenes from mythology related to gods and goddesses. On one side usually there are worshippers with their musical instruments, such as drums, rattles and horns; sacrificial daggers; bowl for drinking the victims' blood; *cauri*, etc.

These textile pieces are used by the so-called lower castes, such as those of sweepers, leather workers, farm labourers, Vaghris etc. When in any settlement of any of the above-mentioned communities a person is suffering from a prolonged illness or any kind of misfortune he or his relative goes to the shrine of the goddess and takes a vow that if he is relieved of his misery or if his desire is fulfilled, he would make the promised sacrifice to the goddess. Later on, when the desired aim is achieved, the person is under obligation to make a feast in which the promised sacrifice is made to the goddess and a dinner provided to the members of the community. At the time of such a sacrifice in the late afternoon, the dome-shaped shrine and the platform around it are cleaned and if possible the shrine is white-washed. Then a sacred enclosure is created around the platform by tieing several printed and painted textile pieces for the goddess-worship. The floor in front of the shrine is decorated with sacred diagrams made from flours and red powders. Over this a coconut and a burning cow-dung cake are placed. The shrine itself is decorated with flower-garlands and silver-gilt threads. The temple itself is conceived as the goddess and is thus decorated with multiple red dots all over the 'body'.

When the ceremony of invocation is about to start, a couple of people walk in with musical instruments such as an hour-glass shaped drum, eymbals, horns, etc., and the priest lights an oil-lamp. Suddenly a person pours some oil on the burning cow-dung cake and with the shooting flames begins the playing of the horns. The long horns resemble trumpets and consist of three parts. At every short interval between singing of two stanzas the trumpets are blown with special rhythm.

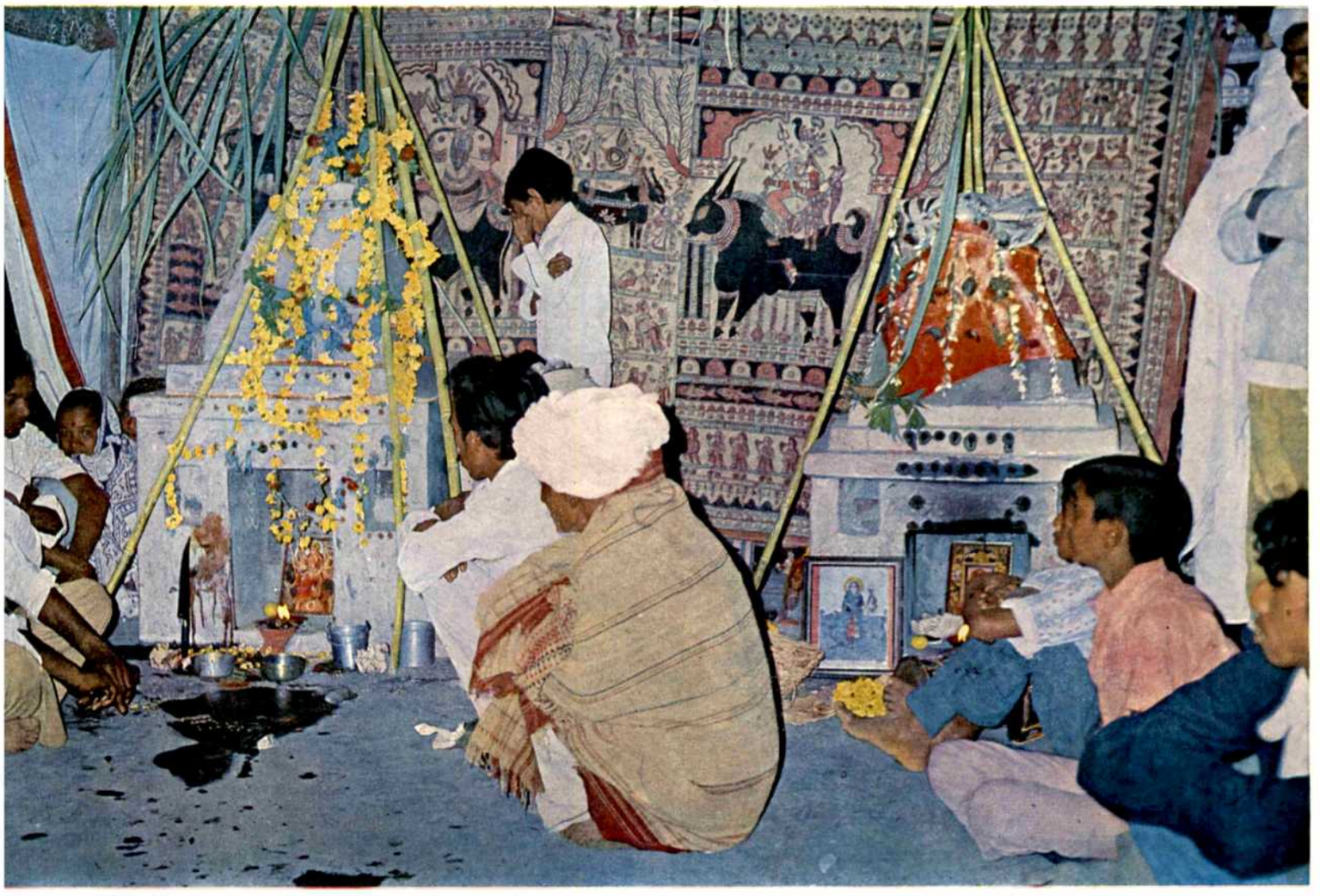
As the singing of the songs proceed, suddenly some men start to swing and shiver. Their consciousness changes and they fall into a trance. They say that the breath (wind) of the goddess blows through them and therefore till when the trance lasts, they become the goddess themselves—they are possessed by her. Many men begin to dance holding either a sword or a *cauri* (the symbols of the goddess) and go on till when they fall down on the floor. Other men remain seated while in trance and mumble some words of prophecy. They say that through these men the goddess speaks. Repeatedly camphor is offered in the fire and heavy incense is burnt so that the air inside the enclosure becomes thick. Continuously the drums are beaten, the horns blown and singing persisted.

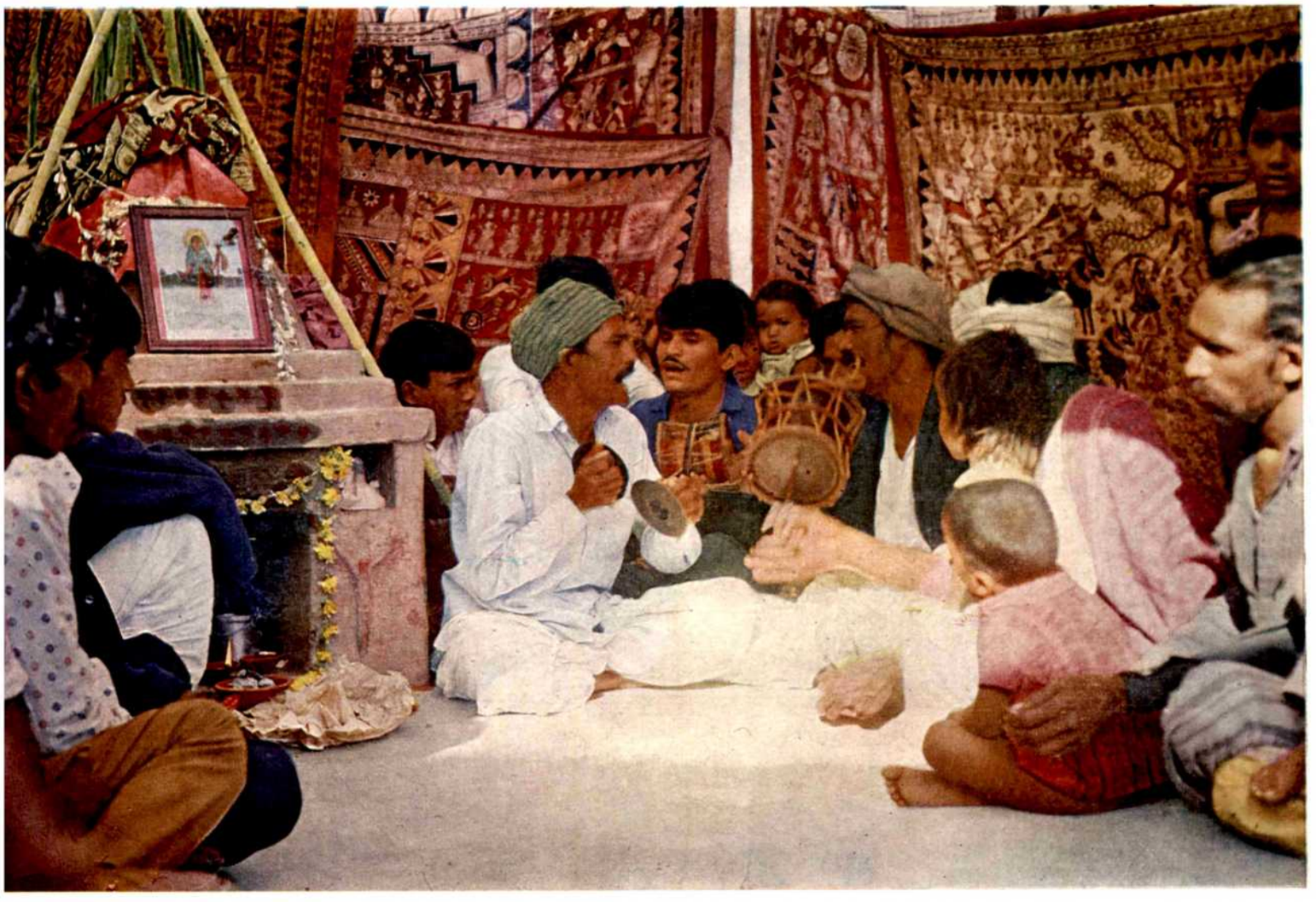
Opposite Page
Puja being performed before the painted cloth showing the goddess, Durga, mounted on a buffalo.

After some dialogues and riddles to test whether the goddess is actually present in the being of some priests, around midnight, the sacrificial animal is brought in front of the goddess. It is decorated with flower-garlands and worshipped with lamps and incense. After obtaining the permission of the goddess, the victim is sacrificed in front of her with swords and daggers. The fresh, warm blood dripping out of the neck is drunk up by those who are possessed by the goddess. After this the cooking for the feast begins. The textile pieces are removed and carefully packed in a trunk to be opened again on the next occasion of sacrifice.

—EBERHARD FISCHER, JYOTINDRA JAIN, HAKU SHAH

Translated from German by Jutta Jain-Neubauer. Courtesy: Textilmosaik no. 19, Zurich.





A contemporary patachitra from Orissa depicting Ardhanarishwara (Collection: J. P. Das)

Patachitra of Orissa

Though sculptural and architectural arts of Orissa have received a good deal of attention from scholars, the pictorial arts of Orissa have not received much attention. Patachitra, the icon-painting of Puri occupies the pride of place among various forms of pictorial arts in Orissa, viz., wall paintings, manuscript paintings and palm leaf etchings, etc. Besides, of all these art forms, only patachitra survives as a living art form, and is still practised by a community of painters (Chitrakars) in and around Puri.

The word 'pata' in Sanskrit has a double connotation—it refers both to cloth and to a picture. Elaborate instructions about the technique of painting on cloth is available in early Sanskrit works like *Vishnudharmottaram* and *Silparatnam.*

The origin of painting on cloth (Patachitra) in Orissa is traced back to the establishment of the present shrine of Lord Jagannath at Puri in the eleventh century A.D., though no pata painting older than belonging to the eighteenth century has been traced so far. However, the close relationship of this form of painting to the temple of Jagannath is confirmed by the community of painters staying in and near Puri, and leaning heavily on Jagannath for the theme of their paintings, and on the pilgrims coming to Puri for the sale of their paintings.

Patachitra is done on small strips of cotton cloth. The canvas is prepared by coating the cloth with soft white stone powder and glue made from tamarind seeds. This gives the cloth tensile strength and a smooth, semi-absorbent surface to take the paint. The painters do not use pencil or charcoal for the preliminary drawings. It is the practice to complete the borders of the painting in the first instance. The painter thereafter starts making a rough sketch directly with brush and light red and yellow colour. The main flat colours are applied next; the colours used are usually white, red, yellow and black. The painter then finishes the painting with fine strokes of black brush lines, which gives the effect of pen work. When the painting is completed, it is held over charcoal fire and lacquer is applied to the surface. This makes the painting water-resistant and durable, besides giving it a shining finish.

The materials used in the paintings are indigenously made. Black colour is made out of lamp black; yellow from 'haritali' stone, and red from 'hingal' stone. White is prepared from the conchshell, by powdering, boiling and filtering.

The subject matter of patachitra is religious and mythological incidents and folk-lore. The painters draw heavily on Krishna Leela and Jagannath themes. *Rasa Panchaka,* a Sanskrit manuscript in the Jagannath Temple Library gives directions for paintings on Krishna Leela themes.

Patachitras represent a happy compromise between folk and classical elements in painting. They are formalised in style, with the faces mostly done in profile, elongated eyes, sharp beak-like nose, pointed chin and heavy coiffure. The women in these paintings remind one of the Orissan sculptural forms. There are no landscapes, perspective or distant views, and all the incidents are in close juxtaposition. The background is filled up with decorations of flowers and foliage. All paintings have decorative borders.

Patachitras have received high praise for their 'strange and fantastic pictorial conceptions, their peculiar and idiosyncratic conventions, their strange and summary system of line formulations, and their deliberately wayward colour schemes'.

—J. P. DAS

The Significance of Chintz

For two whole centuries – from 1600 to 1800 – India was the greatest exporter of textiles the world has ever known, and her fabrics penetrated almost every market of the civilised world. The extent to which Western Europe shared in this trade is reflected in language itself: 'chintz', 'calico', 'dungaree', 'gingham', 'khaki', 'pyjama', 'sash', 'seersucker' and 'shawl' are all Indian words surviving in common English usage. Of these, 'chintz' carries the strongest overtones, for its importation not only revolutionised taste and fashion but challenged the economic stability of Western nations and provoked such passionate political controversy that even the survival of governments was at stake.

'Chintz' is nowadays used to describe any cotton or linen furnishing fabric of floral pattern stained with fast colours. In the eighteenth century, however, it was applied to dress materials as well as furnishing fabrics, but of cotton only, the distinguishing feature being that they were made in India for the European market by the process technically known as mordant- and resist-dyeing. The word had earlier appeared in East India Company trade records as *chint* (singular) and *chintes* (plural), its original native currency being in the region of Western India (especially Gujarat, Khandesh and Rajasthan) where it was applied to painted and printed cottons used for clothing. The extension of its meaning to furnishing fabrics such as bedspreads and hangings, and its adoption in the south of India, seems to have been a late seventeenth-century development. The nineteenth-century lexicographers, including the editors of the Oxford English Dictionary, suggested ultimate derivation from Sanskrit *citra-*, 'variegated'; but its immediate derivation is likely to have been from Gujarati *chit* currently applied to this class of fabric and especially in the sense of 'spotted cloth'. The latter application of the word is consistent with the fact that when the Portuguese traded in the same goods they called them *pintados,* from Portuguese *pinta,* 'a spot, fleck', which also gave *pintada,* 'Guinea-fowl'. A meaning implying 'spotted cloth' hardly fits the sophisticated floral designs represented by chintzes; but it must be remembered that fine chintzes of this class constituted only a small fraction of this total Indian chintz manufacture at any period, the bulk of such goods being cheap expendable wares which have largely disappeared. The fine work survives precisely because it was relatively uncommon and costly, and therefore considered worth preserving.

The main appeal of Indian chintz to European buyers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the brilliance and fastness of the colours. (It was common opinion in the seventeenth century that the colours of Indian chintz actually improved in lustre with washing. However, there is no scientific basis for such a claim. It doubtless arose from the simple observation of the colours of a dirty fabric seeming brighter after removal of the dirt.) This contrasted surprisingly with the only painted and printed fabrics made in Europe prior to this, which were comparatively primitive in technique. The painted hangings of Tudor England, for instance, were linen cloths to which insoluble colours in the form of pigment had been applied, rather as an easel painter applies pigment to a canvas. Similarly, the only kind of fabric-*printing* practised in Europe involved the application of printer's ink or oil-mixed pigment by means of a block. In both cases results were fugitive, and the fabrics correspondingly short-lived. Such methods owed nothing to the true art and science of dyeing, in the accomplishment of which the Indian craftsmen had long been pre-eminent.

True dyeing is a chemical operation involving the use of fixing-agents known as mordants. A mordant is a metallic salt which has to be precipitated on, or within, the fibre in a soluble state, so that when the dye solution is introduced the dye reacts chemically with the metallic salt to form an insoluble coloured compound called a lake. Cotton fibre is especially difficult to treat in this way. For optimum results with dyes of the madder-type applied to cotton, it is not sufficient to confine the lake to the surface: it is necessary that it should be distributed

◀ *Hanging: painted and dyed cotton. Made for the European market.*
Coromandel Coast (northern region), mid. eighteenth century.
(Collection: Royal Ontario Museum, Toronoto, Canada)

evenly throughout the fibre. It was on account of their success in this particular operation that Indian dyers were so renowned in the ancient and mediaeval world.

The origin of mordant-dyeing is at present unknown. Pliny records that the technique was practised in Egypt in Roman times, but he reveals nothing about the materials used, or from where knowledge was acquired. There are grounds for thinking that the Egyptians might have learned from India, and that Indian dyers enjoyed pre-eminence from earliest times. So proverbial was their skill in the Mediterranean world that St. Jerome, in his fourth-century translation of the Bible, likened the lasting value of wisdom to the permanence of the dyed colours of India. This reputation was again echoed in an edict of the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon Synod of Cealcyth, which discouraged priests from wearing garments dyed with Indian colours (*tinctae Indiae coloribus*) — an apparent allusion to their worldly appeal.

The destructive nature of a monsoon climate has unfortunately erased from India itself practically all material evidence of textile history earlier than the late sixteenth century. It is therefore impossible to trace the stages by which India developed the basic technique of mordant- and resist-dyeing to the sophisticated level represented by the finest of the surviving specimens. The earliest known evidence are small fragments of exported Indian cloth found among the buried rubbish of mediaeval Egyptian cities such as Fostat (the site of Old Cairo), where survival was made possible by an exceptionally dry climate. These are mostly fragments of abandoned tomb-covers or canopies, and some of them can be attributed on stylistic grounds to the fifteenth century and possibly earlier; but their usefulness, as evidence, is limited by the fact that they are mostly specimens of the lower grades of export ware, throwing no light on the best work that India might have been expected to produce at this period.

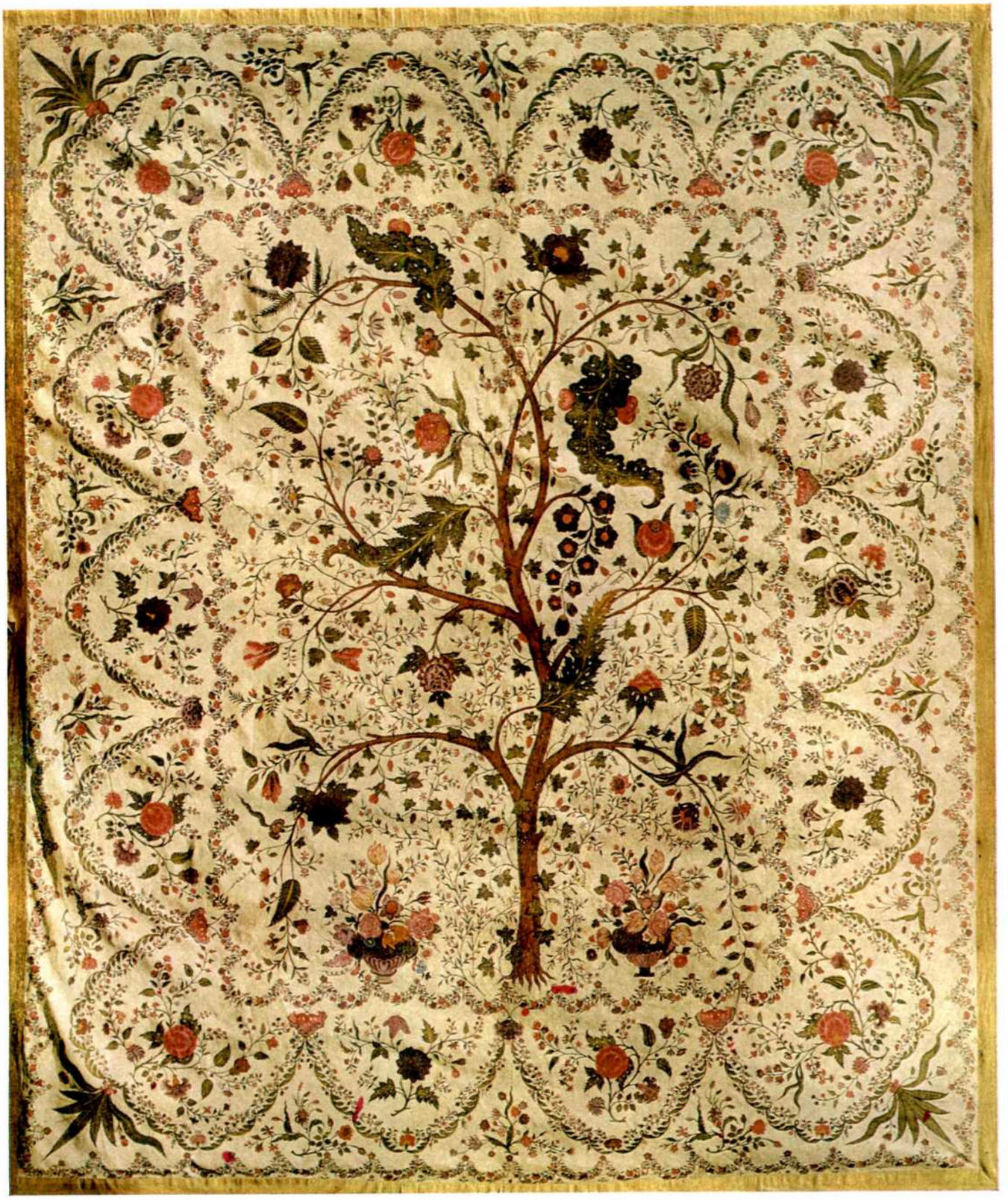
We have already stressed the comparative scarcity of fine chintz as distinct from the bulk of cheap, dyed cottons produced under the same generic name of *chint*. The French traveller Tavernier, visiting Golconda in the middle of the seventeenth century, when this region was the most famous in India for fine cotton painting, remarked that production of the best work was so small that 'even if one engaged all the artisans skilful in the manufacture of such cloths, it would be hard to raise as many as three bales'. The reason why specimens of fibre chintz survive in museum collections, while the cheaper grades produced in much greater quantity have disappeared, is simply because the former were considered by successive generations as worthy of preservation. Cheap Indian chintz, on the other hand, was treated as expendable, and on the rare occasions when a specimen does come to notice, it is usually because it has served as the lining of some more precious fabric.

Technically, a broad distinction between fine and commonplace Indian chintz is that the former were usually 'painted' and the latter 'printed'. In the first case, mordants and resists were applied to the cloth free-hand with the equivalent of a 'pen' or 'brush'; in the second, the mordants, after being thickened with gum, were applied by print-block. The comparatively inferior results in the latter case were due not only to the more mechanical nature of the process, but also to the fact that the admixture of gum with the mordant inevitably reduced its efficacy as a chemical agent and thus also the quality of colour achieved.

During the seventeenth century, most of the fine chintzes reaching Europe came from Western India, including the inland centres of Sironj and Burhanpur; but after 1700 the chief region of supply was the Coromandel Coast. Although the technical processes were complicated and exacting, the equipment used was the simplest kind, and all work was done in the open air, usually on the bank or dried-up bed of a river. Most operations were therefore limited to the 'dry' season and had to stop with the monsoons. From accounts of merchants and travellers we

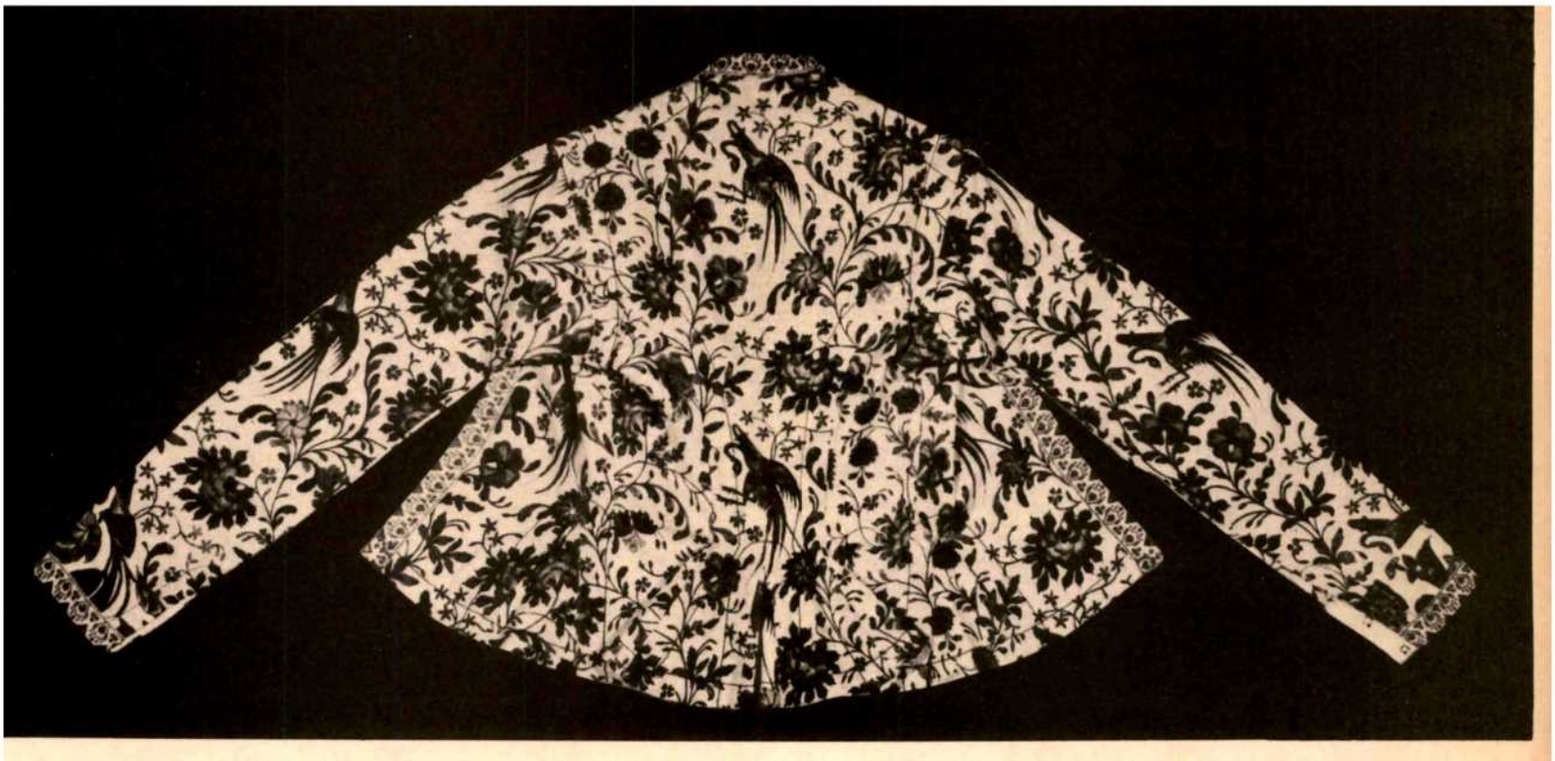
Palampore: painted and dyed cotton. Made for the European market. Coromandel Coast (northern region), eighteenth century, second half.
(Collection: Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

Palampore: painted and dyed cotton. Made for the **European market.**
Coromandel Coast (northern region), eighteenth century, second half.
(Collection: Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada).



Palampore: painted and dyed cotton. Made for the European market.
From Western India, eighteenth century, second quarter.
(Collection: Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada).

Housecoat: painted and dyed cotton. Made for the European (English) market.
Coromandel Coast (southern region), mid eighteenth century.
(Collection: Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada).



Woman's Jacket: painted and dyed cotton. Made for the European (Dutch) market. Coromandel Coast, eighteenth century first half.
(Collection: Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada).

know that in South India (and probably also in Western India) the cotton-painters were low-caste Hindus working on a joint-family basis, usually in conditions of extreme poverty and indebtedness. They were so poor that the merchant or broker was sometimes required to advance essential materials in the form of cloth and wax and even rice needed for subsistence. There was considerable division of labour among joint-families within a particular community, and it seems that each joint-family may have specialised in one particular part of the manufacturing process. The Dutch agent Havart, describing conditions among cotton-painters at Palakollu in Golconda in the 1680's, said that there were 'four kinds of painters, who each have according to their family a special name. Between these is divided the demand, and they put out the work again to those of lower rank who do the work'. Here he seems to be describing a procedure common even today among Indian handicraft workers, whereby one family, having undertaken to supply a finished article, sub-contracts for certain specialised operations in the manufacture. For instance, in this case one family might have done the initial drawing of the design, another the mordanting, a third the waxing, and so on. Indigo-dyeing was usually done by a separate caste. Havart gives a picture of the manufacture going on 'very slowly, like snails which creep on and appear not to advance.' Another seventeenth-century witness described the actual painting (by which he probably meant the drawing of outlines and the application of mordants) being done by 'little children as well as elder grown, they stretching the piece on the ground, and sitting up them, run them over with a dexterity and exactness peculiar to themselves.'

How such fine works of art were produced in such circumstances and depressed human conditions is a subject of perennial interest, from which both the sociologist and the art historian has much to learn.

—JOHN IRWIN

[Mr. John Irwin bases this note on the introductory chapter of *Origins of Chintz* which is the standard work on the history of Indian cotton-painting, written in collaboration with Mrs. K. B. Brett, formerly of Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, and published by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, in 1970. Unfortunately, this work is now out of print; but there are copies in leading Indian libraries including the National Museum, the Calico Museum and the Prince of Wales Museum. —*Ed.*]

1

1 Palampore. Coromandel Coast, northern region
Eighteenth century, first half.
Gift of Mrs. Harry Wearne.
See Origins of Chintz, *cat. no. 17.*

Some Important Indian Chintzes
In The Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

The Harry Wearne Collection of over sixty Indian painted and dyed cottons made for the European market, was presented to The Royal Ontario Museum in 1934 by his widow. Harry Wearne was a designer, first of wallpapers and later printed textiles, and he collected not only Indian chintzes but also eighteenth and nineteenth century printed cottons, mostly French, as well as European silks and embroideries. The purpose of the collection was that it should serve as inspiration for his own designs. It was patterns, rather than provenance, documentation or condition that were of primary importance to him. In all, he collected about one thousand pieces. Since the arrival of this generous gift, the Museum has added to the group of Indian chintzes a further twenty-five pieces which broaden the range of the collection in date and design.

The chintzes fall into several well-known categories. Among those well represented are the flowering tree, the Berainesque style, patterns for furnishings and costume, and yardage. In each there are individual pieces which are outstanding. Their importance lies partly in the information they give us on variations on certain themes, such as the flowering tree and the wide range of western sources drawn upon to be executed in the chintz technique, and partly in the remarkable skill of the chintz painters working in this exacting and time-consuming technique.

Among the fifteen tree palampores there are several of interest because they illustrate time-saving devices employed by those responsible for the designs, and for meeting the demands of the East India Companies in the first half of the eighteenth century. The purpose of these devices was to create variations on a popular kind of tree form.

Fig. 1

Reversing a design and changing the border was a simple method of achieving variation. The tree is the same as one on a palampore in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (accession number I S36-1950), but in reverse, and since the palampore on which the Toronto version is drawn is smaller, the tree has had to be adjusted to fit within those dimensions. Several large blossoms have been deleted and replaced by small flower and leaf sprays, and the tree no longer stands in a vase but is poised, with exposed roots, upon a scale mound. Peacocks have been added and an entirely different border chosen. These features relate to the tree design as executed in another palampore (R.O.M. Acc. No. 934-4-13).

Here the chintz designer and painter have been confronted with an opposite set of circumstances, that of adjusting a tree to a much larger palampore than that for which it was originally intended. The branches have been greatly extended giving it a tenuous quality. Furthermore the mound has been heightened by additional rows of scales. The resourceful chintz painter, faced with more space between the branches than usual, and especially down each side, has drawn on his own vocabulary of flower sprays to fill them and by so doing has given the design unusual richness. Gilded outlines, including those in the border, further enhance it.

Figs. 2,3

The border is the same as that on the palampore in Fig. 1 but it has been stretched out to fill the greater length and width of the palampore. Borders with branches extending from corner urns or vases, have many variations.

Both this palampore and the above-mentioned one in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, are also notable because of the excellent condition of their colours. The greens have not faded. Yellow was painted directly over the dyed indigo blue to make green. Because the yellow employed was fugitive, many chintzes no longer display their original strong greens, oranges and yellows.

Another method of varying a design was to employ the same, or almost identical tree form, that is the trunk and branches, but rearrange or change the large flowerheads and foliage. The quilt in Fig. 2 belongs to this group but in it some branches have been cut off to allow room for the vase of flowers in each corner of the field, a convention for bed covers found in

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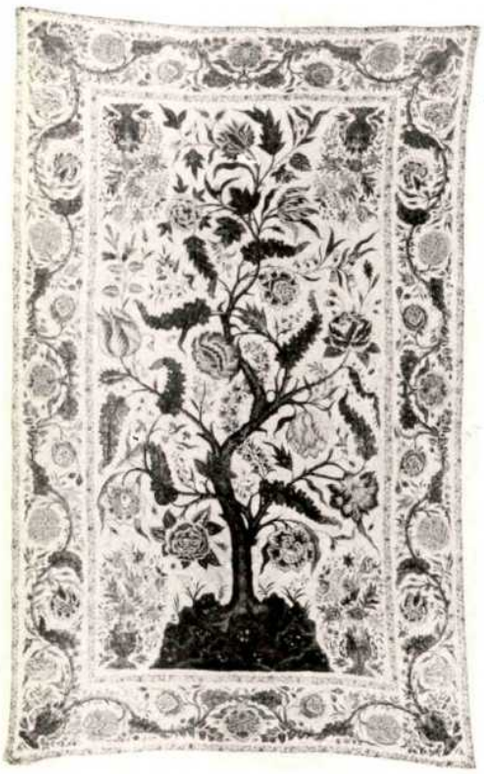

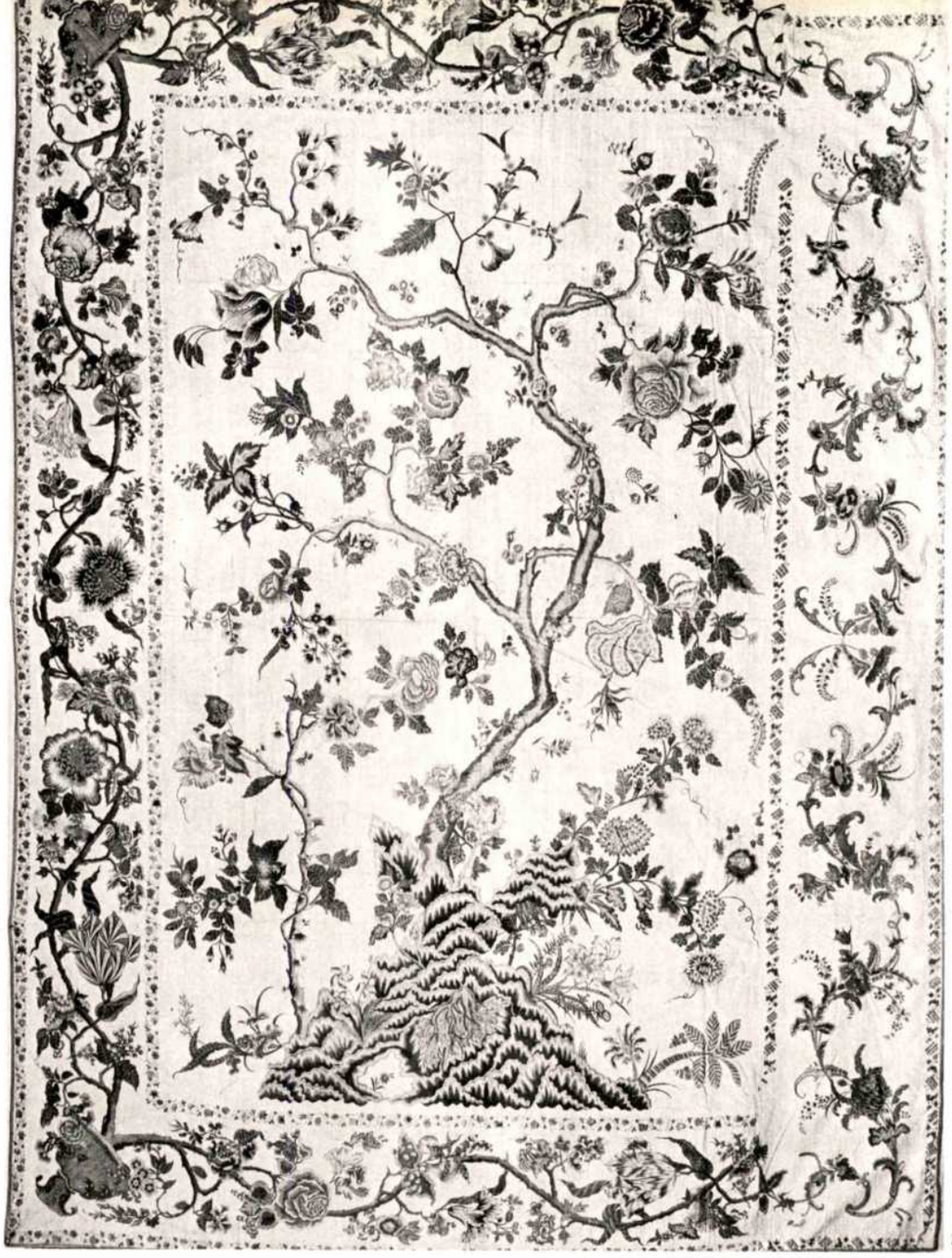

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2 *Quilt. Coromandel Coast, northern region, Eighteenth century, first half.* *See* Origins of Chintz, *cat. no. 13.*

3 *Palampore, Coromandel Coast, northern region. Eighteenth century, second quarter.* *Gift of Mrs. Harry Wearne.* *See* Origins of Chintz, *cat. no. 27.*

chintzes for the Dutch market of the first half of the eighteenth century. The quilt bears the stamp of the United East India Company and was probably part of the re-export trade to the Netherlands during the period of the ban on the importation of Indian chintzes into England. It was found in the Netherlands.

The quilt, which was made up in Europe, is backed with white silk tabby and has a wool stuffing. It is reversible. The quilted pattern, except the width of the border, bears no resemblance to that of the chintz. There is a large eight-petaled flowerhead in the centre and a three-petaled one in each corner of the field, which is quilted in a lattice pattern. The border is one of flowers enclosed by coiling stems. Running stitch, worked with yellow silk, is employed throughout.

An example of the practice of attaching miscellaneous flower sprays to an unrelated tree style may be seen in Fig. 3. Here the angular trunk and branches reflect those in Chinese embroideries and wall-papers of the first half of the eighteenth century. The shading on the mounds, resembling that in Chinese embroideries worked in satin stitch, also suggests a Chinese source. The lilies growing from it are almost identical to a clump, in the same position, on a Chinese embroidery in early eighteenth century style, (accession number 956.138), in the Royal Ontario Museum. In contrast, the flowers on the tree come from various European sources. Some suggest the style of Pillement, others have lines of shading and cross-hatching indicating an engraved source. Mixed sources may also be found in the border where the corner urns are painted with markings simulating wood graining suggesting a marquetry source.

—KATHARINE BRETT

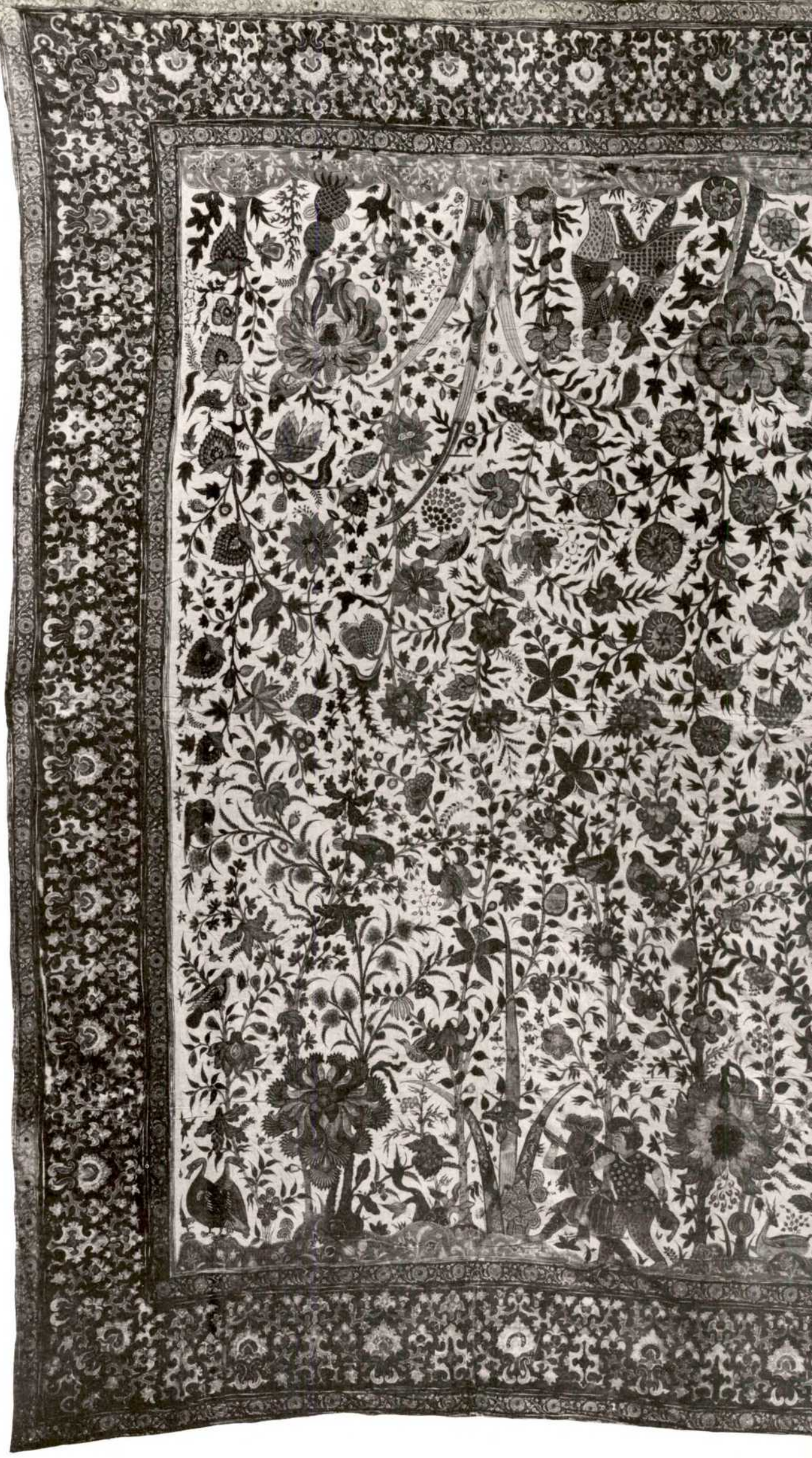
Painters on Cotton

The first KALAMKARIS to reach Western Europe in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were those brought home as exotic novelties by the early travellers to India. They excited immediate attention here by their rich glowing colours and fascinating detail.

The large cotton floorspread or cover, painted in the Kingdom of Golconda (probably at Petaboli in the Kistna Delta) about 1630 A.D., was once in the TOSHIKHANA of the Palace of Amber, Rajasthan. It bears in the lower right-hand corner a seal of Mirza Rana Jai Singh of Amber (1622-68 A.D.) The painted cottons of Golconda were acknowledged to be the finest in India, and were traded through the Port of Masulipatam to Western Asia and South-east Asia long before the Europeans came.

The ruling dynasty of Golconda was of Persian origin; Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (1580-1611 A.D.) maintained the style of the Persian Safavid Court, and a large community of Persians was settled in his capital. The border of this cloth derives from designs of Persian carpet-borders of the period, and the courtiers who appear hunting, shooting birds, and relaxing with wine amid the profusion of flowering trees, bamboo and flowering plants are in the Persian-style costume affected by the Golconda Court. The dominating conventional flowers are Persian in design, and the perfect placement of the main flowers (PHUL BOJANA) is in the finest traditions of Islamic art. But despite the influence of Persian settlers and traders, and possibly of Persian craftsmen, the painting is unmistakeably by Indian hands...

—MARGARET HALL



1 Cover or Floorspread: Courtiers hunting, shooting birds, and relaxing amid flowering trees, bamboos and flowering plants. Cotton, painted and mordant-dyed. From Golconda State (probably Petaboli), about A.D. 1630.
(Museum No. I M160-1929)

2 Courtier and Courtesan: Detail from Fig. 1.

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Kalamkari:
Transformation by Nelly Sethna

The infinite potential of traditional designs can best be illustrated by the Kalamkari textiles produced, at present, by the work units at Masulipatam in Andhra Pradesh. Some of the most exquisite motifs, used for centuries, are again being printed on the bed-covers and curtains. But the designs have been re-arranged to provide a startlingly fresh approach. The final effects not only reveal a new sense of aesthetics but more important, link it back to tradition, showing perhaps that there exists a strong umbilical connection between the two.

When Nelly Sethna, the well-known textile designer, visited Masulipatam around 1970, she found that the work being produced there was static. It carried not only the worst remnants of the ancient tradition but the workers did not have the imagination or the will to create something new from this. Saddened by the state of the ancient and glorious tradition, Nelly set about, with the help of the Homi Bhabha fellowship, trying to rejuvenate the industry. She had first seen the most intricately designed Kalamkari works from this area at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Then still a student in London, she had never visited Masulipatam but was fascinated by the rich shades of colours and the exquisite designs beautifully blended together to make each piece a work of art.

But present-day Masulipatam textiles were another matter. Some of the beautiful motifs still remained but the monotonous repetitiveness of the designs led Nelly to search for more contemporary lay-outs. In the process she also managed to unearth many old blocks which had fallen into disuse.

The first thing she did was to remove the jarring contrast between the shocking white background and the coloured motifs. This she achieved by leaving the cloth in the final stage, when the printing and dyeing was over, unbleached, instead of the conventional bleaching. The off-white background, she found, lent a warm, pleasant harmony to the designs.

Gradually the new designs began to appear and what met the eye was literally a transformation. The traditional door-curtain, for instance, had become a mechanical formula: a large cone-shaped 'pandu' in the centre emerging from a vase, flanked by two peacocks at the bottom. On either side of this were the 'sthambhas' containing smaller 'pandus' and other floral designs. Above the 'pandu' was a flowered arch borrowed from the Persian prayer cloth.

Indeed the entire curtain was originally designed for the Persian market in the late eighteenth century and is still manufactured in Iran. It can be compared with a similar curtain produced in Isfahan, Iran, which I saw in Nelly's collection. But the intricacy and subtlety of the work on the Iranian curtain made the present one look much inferior.

From the traditional door curtain, Nelly extracted individual elements to make completely different forms. Thus the large 'pandus' are used by themselves on a bed of small paisleys. The ochre paisleys rest on the bed cover flushed with red leaf work. These in turn set off the large sombre 'pandus' emerging gracefully from off-white vases tinted with flower patterns.

Then again the 'sthambhas' are placed one after another to form a column in a door curtain. These in turn point towards another group of 'stambhas' placed upside down. In both cases only the lower portion of the motif with the 'pandu' is used. And the entire wall of vertical flowered pillars is balanced on both sides by broad, horizontal panels of flowers. The muted ochre and red of the curtain bring out the finely etched pattern on the 'sthambhas'.

This is one of the most graphic of Nelly's compositions where the play of horizontal and vertical lines provides a striking friction within an overall harmony.

The leaf-motifs from the 'sthambhas' are used without the border in a circular fashion in a canopy. These form large petals around a diamond-cut design. Row after row of flowers borrowed from other patterns complete a very pleasing lay-out.

A large, dramatic wall-hanging, twelve feet across and five feet high again consists of the 'sthambhas' spaced out one after another along the width of the cloth. The ochre and maroon leaf motif is delightfully interspersed by two different black and white prints running between them. This arrangement though extremely simple is effective because of the slight shock caused to the eye by the two different running prints. It also serves to create a flow of movement betwen the 'sthambhas'.

The static quality of many of the earlier designs is removed in her work by the simple device of using patterns in the background which collide with the foreground. Then again the borders in earlier formats which were in the sidelight are now brought into focus by forming the main motif. This she achieves by joining many different borders together, as for instance in an attractive curtain where two broad panels of borders give way to a black and white print in the centre. When thus emphasised the borders reveal a rich variety of floral carving which had been ignored upto now.

But the most exquisite piece is a bed-spread covered entirely with large Persian paisleys. Formerly used only in the border, this delightful motif had fallen into total disuse in recent times. It had to be unearthed from the house of one of the old Kalamkari families where it had been buried for many years. And it is an exquisite block with the large paisley containing within it another paisley delicately woven in flowers. It also carried its own background of intricate veins of a leaf.

No longer fixed at the edges, the large Persian paisleys pulsate sending a warm glow from their rich beds. The fine black and red outlines appear flushed from a distance. The entire bed-spread as a result is a delicately sensuous essay in rejuvenation, a coming back to life.

She also uses these paisleys in the border but in a very different manner. A large square of burnt red diamonds, surrounded by a forest of purple diamonds suddenly break into a chasm of large red paisleys at the edges. Here she does away with the earlier formula of the centre-spread consisting of a circular disc on a bed of fine print, to introduce a more abstract format.

The central disc known as 'padmam' as a matter of fact had fallen into complete disuse and was again revived by her. But when Nelly uses the floral centre, it is not as the pointed axis of the sheet but to emanate larger and larger discs, like the effervescent rays of the sun forever enlarging the centre. In a very effective bed-cover, the lay-out consists of the richly carved circles of paisleys ringed by three-leaved flowers. This again extends to vertical rays, formed by a pattern from the prayer mat, to cover the entire surface. The background is a finely etched sea of plant and flower life. The centre thus becomes the whole and not just the axis of the surface.

Here lies the essential difference between the traditional formats and those re-designed by Nelly. Many of the earlier lay-outs centre around a fixed axis and are neatly laid out like a Mughal garden. They were, as a matter of fact, designs borrowed from the Persian miniatures so rich in their floral expressions, during the time that the area was dominated by Muslim kings and catered to the Persian market.

It is no mere accident that the designs also tended to emulate the prayer mat in its square frontality of the masjid. They spoke of a religious consciousness which rested on a fixed uni-

verse where everything was ordered and put in its place. No matter how abstract the designs, they were laid out in a square which also approximated the sanctum-sanctorum of the temple.

And it is this universe which Nelly has unwittingly dismembered in her designs—not out of rebelliousness but to set the motion of life going. The horizontal and the linear designs clash against each other creating new possibilities. There is nothing known or complacent about the stories they tell and each one has to be examined for itself to set new thoughts rolling.

But within the new lies the old and this is what Nelly would like to emphasize. She points out that none of the motifs are hers. All lay embedded within the ancient bed of tradition and indeed so rich are they that there is no need for new blocks. They just needed to be used to suit contemporary taste—which she has attempted to do. And much work has to be done, according to her, if the tradition is to be fully vitalized.

For one thing, the long, arduous process of applying mordant and resist waxing which led to such splendid variations in shades has given way to simplified methods with poorer results. The colour indigo has been totally abandoned as the method of resist waxing became too time-consuming. Alongside, the technique of applying mordant to get different shades of red has been forgotten and cannot be used. And the beautiful old blocks, especially the circular ones, are lost and are difficult to unearth.

One of the most worrying facts about the industry is the total absence of any designers, which results in a lack of conception on the part of the workers. All other conditions being equal, this would have led to, if not re-invention, at least a continuation of the old traditions. But this was a notable handicap even in earlier times.

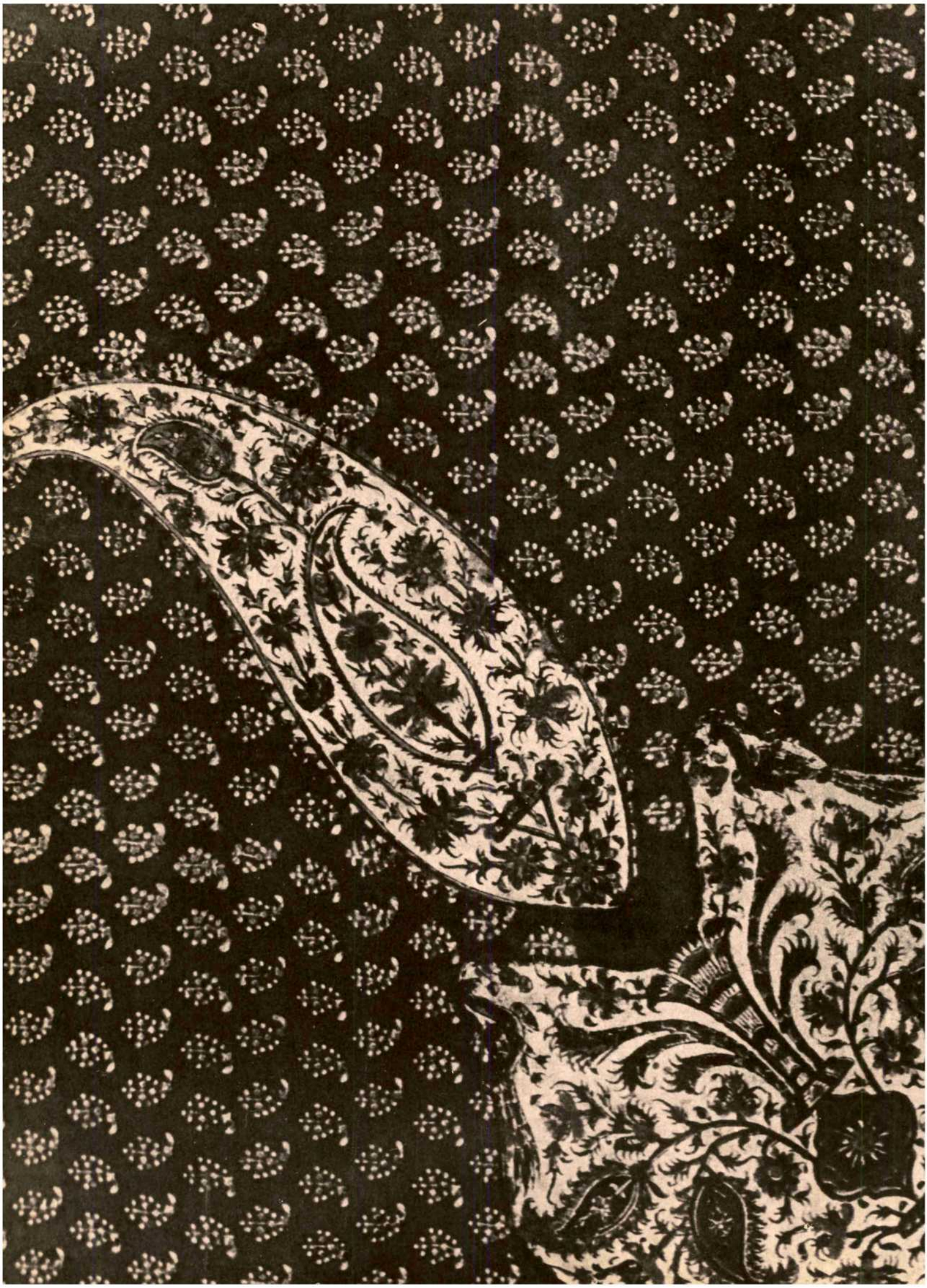
In *"Origins of Chintz"*, John Irwin and Katharine Brett record that in important centres of textile manufacture during the seventeenth century there were very few designers or 'naqqash' as they were known. In Kashmir, for instance, at the height of the export trade in shawls, there were only five or six naqqash families and the proportion was not likely to be higher in the cotton painting centres. But during the time of the British rule their numbers deteriorated even further, as the painters began to depend more and more on pattern books sent from Europe.

It is important to remember that this handicap existed even before the time of the British, lest the buck be passed on to them too easily. And also it has to be noted that even with the impetus that the industry has received in recent times with the Handloom and Handicraft Board setting up a training centre, no provision has been made for people to do original work.

The only local person who has produced some interesting new designs is a retired revenue official. Inspired by Nelly's work, he has created a large 'padmam' design with a block which has not been used before. In a bed-spread he has carefully juxtaposed the 'padmam' with the 'pandu' to make a remarkably attractive lay-out. He has also been able to experiment with colours to get subtle variations of red and green. None of his works have, however, been commercially produced by the work units nor has he received any encouragement to experiment.

For the present the work units at Masulipatam are flooded with more demands than they can meet both by exporters and for domestic use. The exquisite designs are enough to meet a variety of tastes and aesthetic sensibilities. But they also serve as an object lesson in contemporary imagination—that fine balance between the richness of tradition and the new needs and desires of the present.

—YASHODHARA DALMIA



2

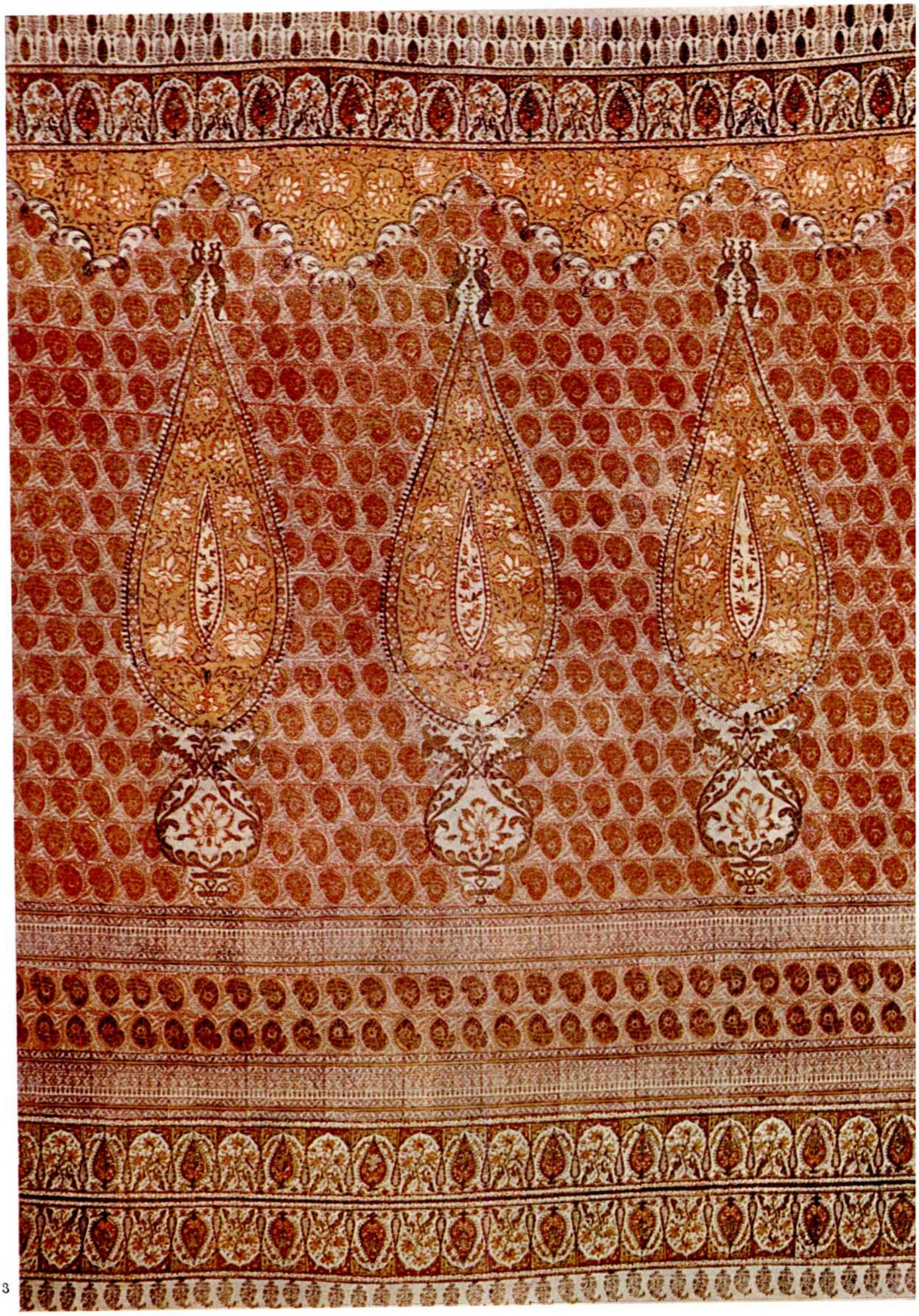
1. *Corners of bedspreads are usually finished with graceful paisley motifs.*

2. *Possibly a prayer cloth with bold floral design and use of rich colour.*

3. *A contemporary bedspread with the big leaf, or Pandu, dominating tiny paisleys scattered in the background to balance the vast area. The borders have a variety of smaller leaf motifs and inverted placements.*

4. *Possibly a Palamposh, or door curtain, typically Iranian. Big central leaf called Pandu, embellished with floral motifs with Sthambhas on either side. Flora and fauna play an important part in Kalamkari work—like the tiger, deer and peacock and other birds inspired by the Mughals, to express their love of wild life in India.*

An old piece purchased from Iran. Masulipatam craftsmen claim that it was done by their forefathers.



It is dusk in a traditional temple town in South India.
The music of the cow bells, as they return home
mingles with the resonance of the bells
from the distant temple. As you wind your way through a dim alley,
you see faint yellow lights coming on and hear a 'raga'
floating through the air.
From behind a large wooden door you hear an incantation
'Om Ganesh Namo'.
repeated several times.

It is a simple little house with
plastered walls and tiled roof. An earthen path leads
to the door and you look in to see a man kneeling
before a wooden bench, intently painting.

The artist prays to Lord Vinayaka before he begins to pen the Ramayana.

The Gods, Devas, Rishis and Narada request Lord Vishnu for protection from Ravana and Kumbhakarna.

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Sravana carrying his blind parents to pilgrimage.

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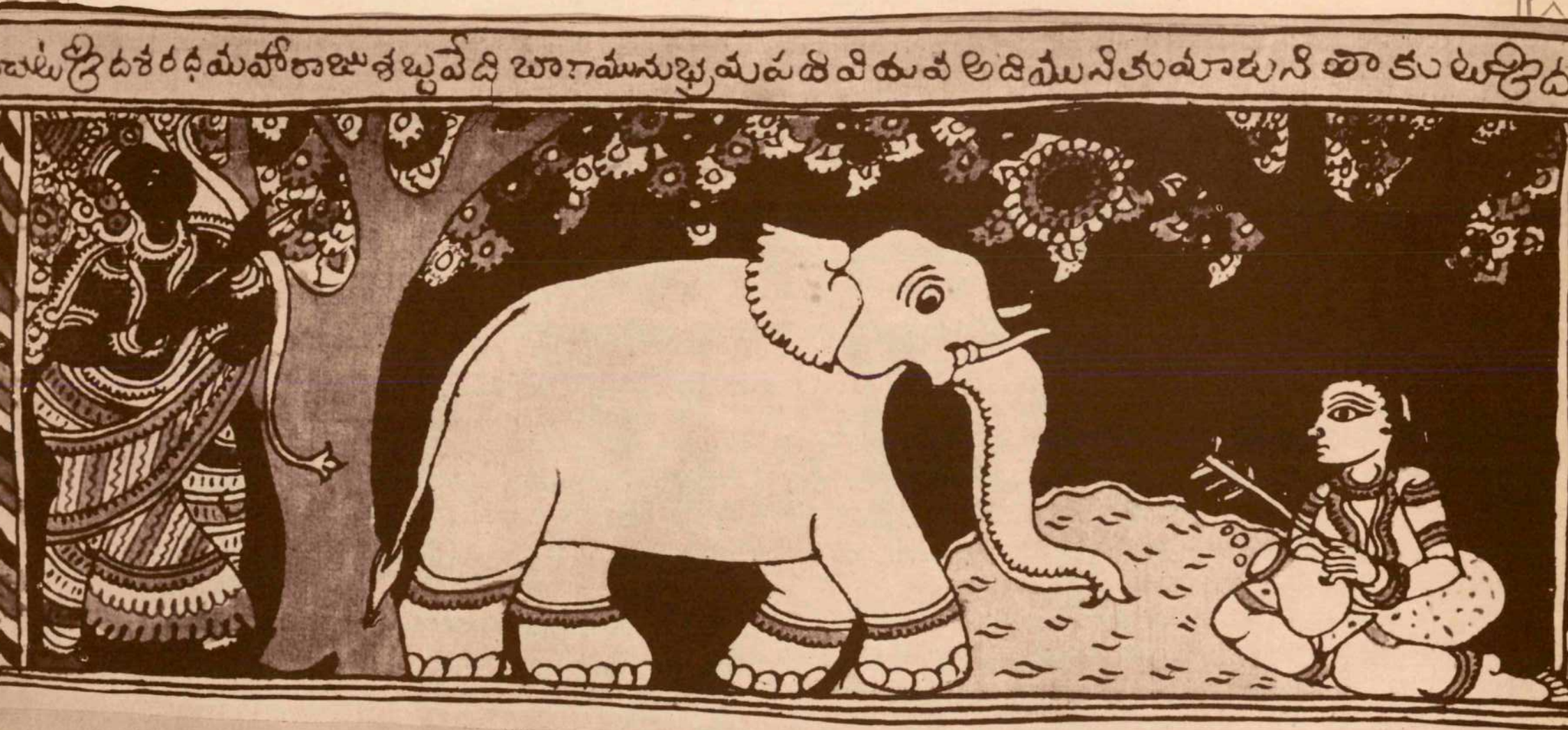

King Dasaratha while hunting, accidently kills Sravana.

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King Dasaratha begs Sravana's parents' forgiveness.

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King Ramapadha and elders arrange to bring Rishyasringa to save the Kingdom from draught conditions.

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Famous courtesans are sent to inveigle the eccentric Rishi.

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The courtesans dance bewitchingly and Rishyasringa is persuaded.

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To accompanying fanfare the mighty Rishi is carried in palanquin to the Kingdom of Ramapadha.

Ramapadha Maharaja marries his daughter to Rishyasringa.

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Great Rishis, elders and Sages led by Vasishta advise King Dasaratha to perform Puthrakameshti Yaaga.

Dasaratha Maharaja receives the bowl of 'Payasam' (nectar) from the God born of the flames of the Yaaga.

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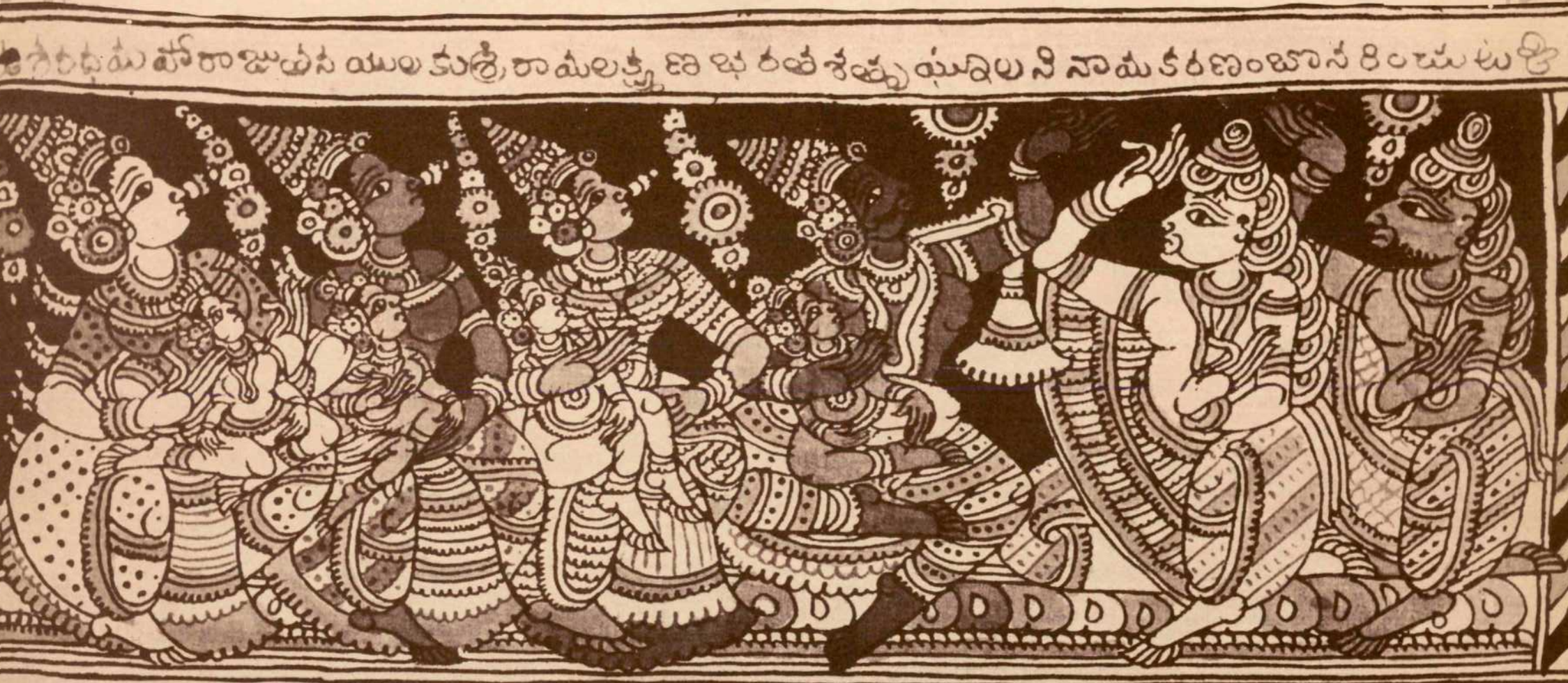
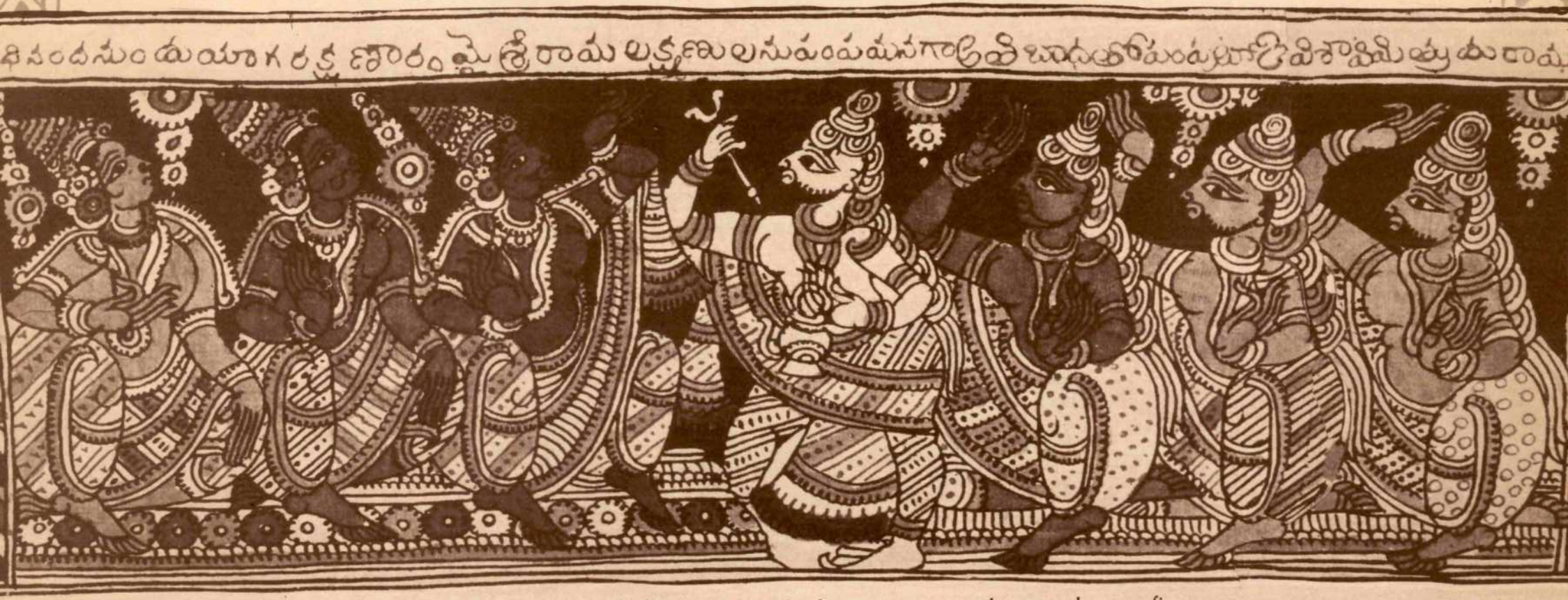
Dasaratha offers the "Payasam" to his three wives Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi.

HOTEL FERNHILL IMPERIAL . OOTACAMUND



Dasaratha names his four sons as Rama, Lakshmana, Bharat and Satrughna.

TATA ENTERPRISES



Viswamitra takes Rama and Lakshmana to the forest to protect the sacred yaaga fire.

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Viswamitra teaches Rama and Lakshmana the secret mantras, Bala and Athi Bala

TATA OIL MILLS COMPANY LIMITED

On the advice of Viswamitra Rama kills Tratika.

TIMES OF INDIA

Rama and Lakshmana defeat the Rakshasas and save the Yaaga being performed by Viswamitra.

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Viswamitra tells the story of the Ganga.

Ahalya freed from the curse.

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THE KHATAU MAKANJI
SPG. & WVG. CO. LTD

Rama effortlessly bends Siva's bow, strings it and draws back with such irresistible force that the mighty bow snaps with a crash (Siva Dhanurbhangam).

BOMBAY DYEING

Dasaratha hears of the marriage proposal.

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THE ARVIND MILLS LIMITED
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With pomp and fanfare Dasaratha proceeds with his queens to Mithila to perform the marriage of his princely sons.

TATA ELECTRIC COMPANIES

Sage Vasishta, learned in the Vedas and the Shastras, arrives to conduct the sacred ceremony of Rama's coronation.

Rama bends the bow without effort and lets fly an arrow. Parasurama is humbled and pardoned by Rama (Parasurama Garva-Bhangam).

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Incorporated in the United Kingdom.
The liability of members is limited.

Rama and his brothers are united in holy matrimony with Sita and her cousins at the most auspicious moment.

Kaikeyi is filled with violent envy. She reminds Dasaratha of the boons he had granted her.

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Rama confirms to Kaikeyi his promise to his father.

Rama takes leave of Queen Kaushalaya prior to departing for the forest.

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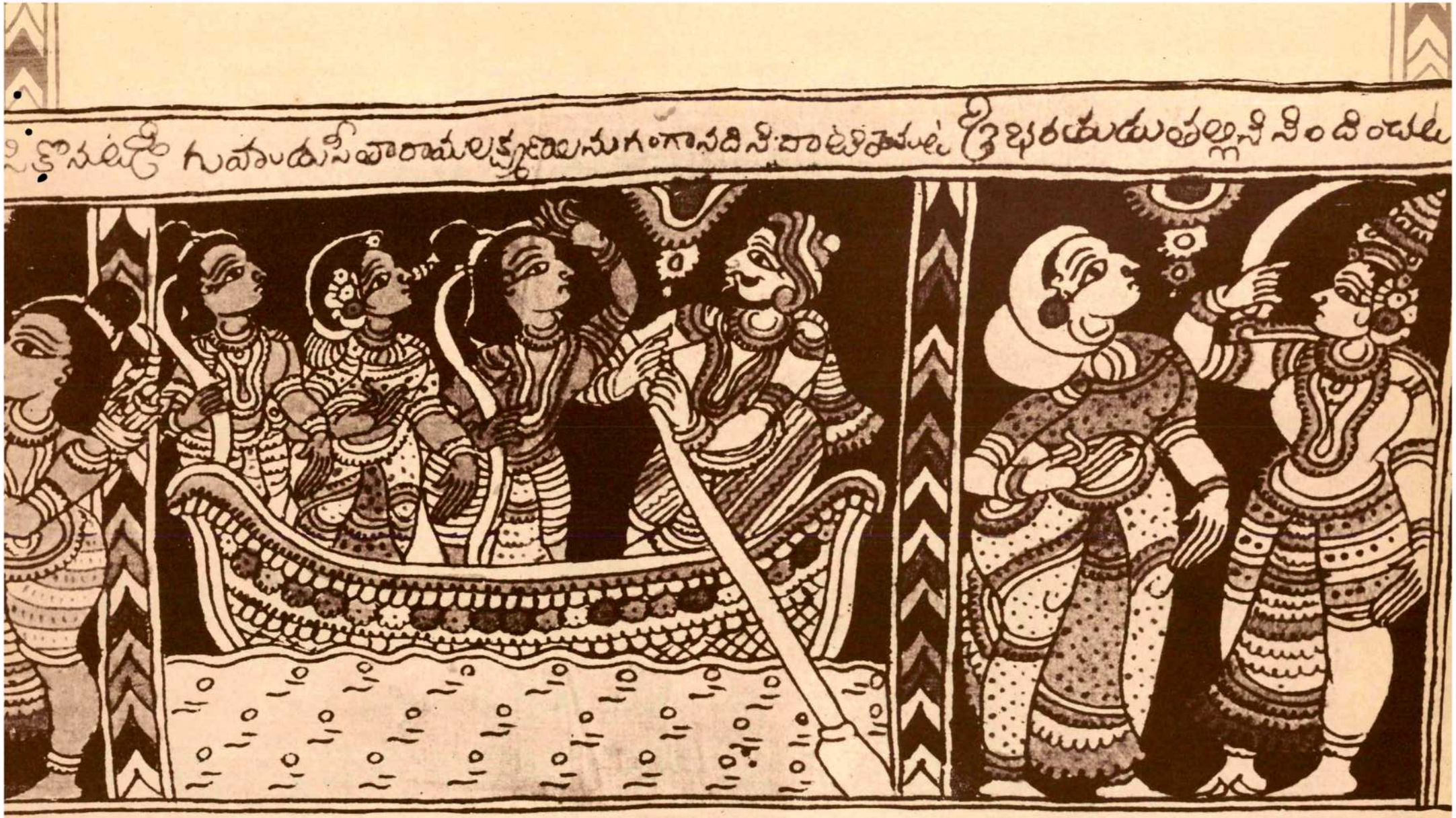

Rama crosses the Ganga aided by Guha. Bharat is angry with his mother for causing Rama's exile.

THERMAX (INDIA) PVT. LIMITED
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Bharat enthrones the Sandals of Rama, symbolically continuing Rama's rule.

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Cottage Industries

Just a gallop from the Gateway

Rama and Lakshmana kill Viradu.

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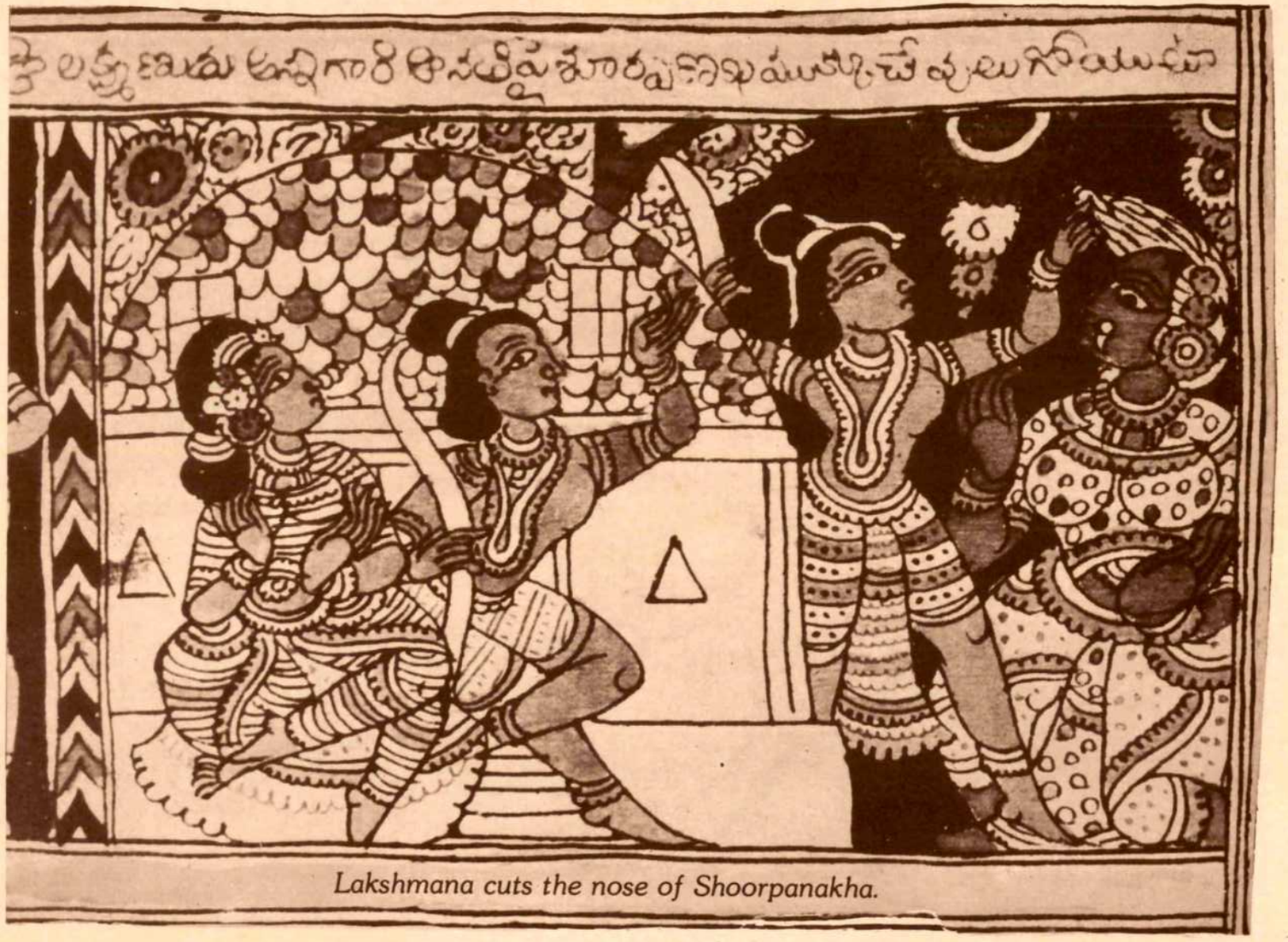
(A Government of India Undertaking)
The Bank that moves out to people and places



Lakshmana cuts the nose of Shoorpanakha.

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ATUL®
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Noseless, ugly Shoorpanakha seeks revenge, urging Ravana to abduct the matchless Sita.

Mareecha advises Ravana to desist.

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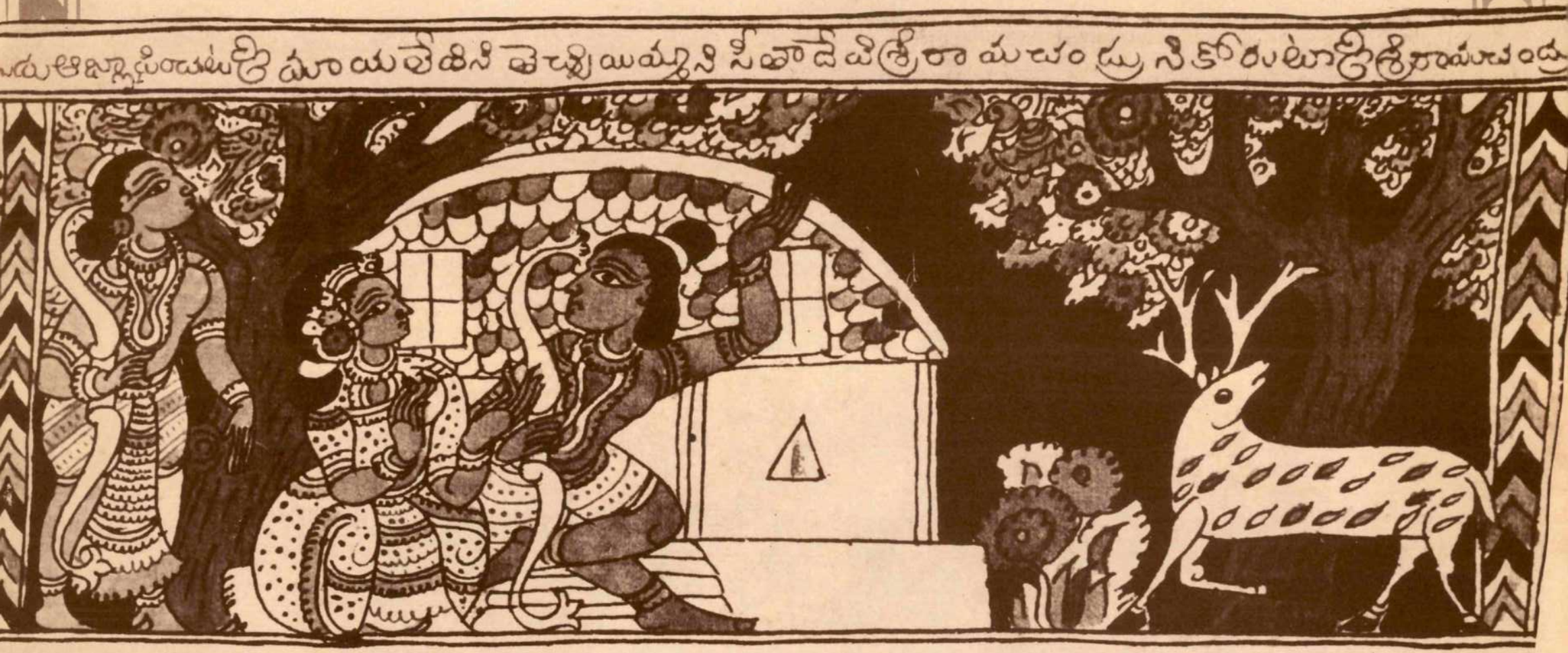

Sita is charmed by the Golden Deer and beseeches Rama to make it captive.

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Rama kills Mareecha, the demon, who was in the disguise of the deer.

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PARISRAMA BHAVANAM, FATEH MAIDAN ROAD, HYDERABAD-500 029, A.P.

Lakshmana prays Sita to remain within the bounds of safety.

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE TEXTILE
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POSNETT BHAVAN, TILAK ROAD, HYDERABAD 500 001

Ravana, in disguise as a Sanyasi, asks Sita for alms.

Ravana abducts helpless Sita.

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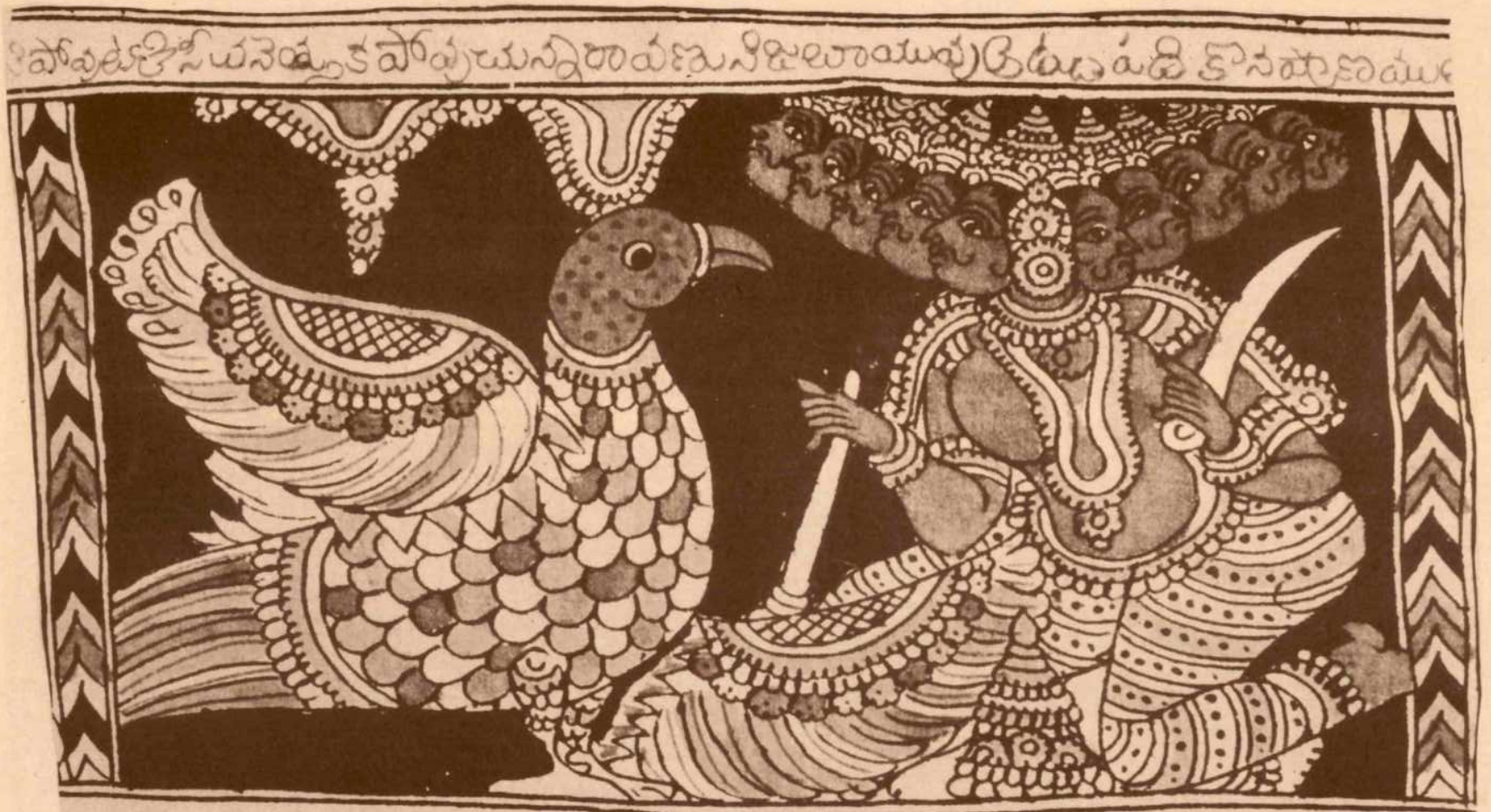

Jatayu battles with evil Ravana, who cuts off his wings.

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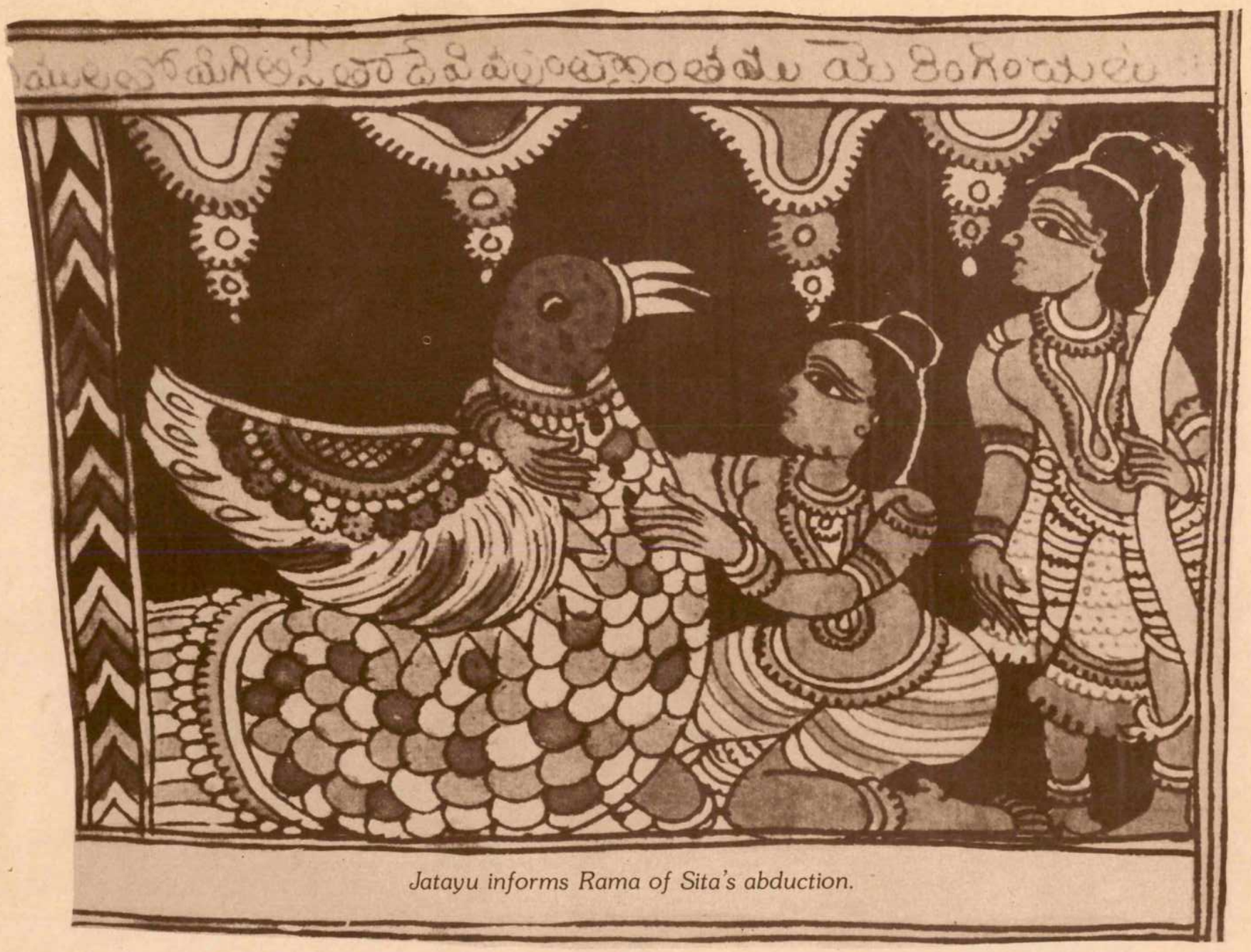
115, PARK LANE, SECUNDERABAD, ANDHRA PRADESH.



Jatayu informs Rama of Sita's abduction.

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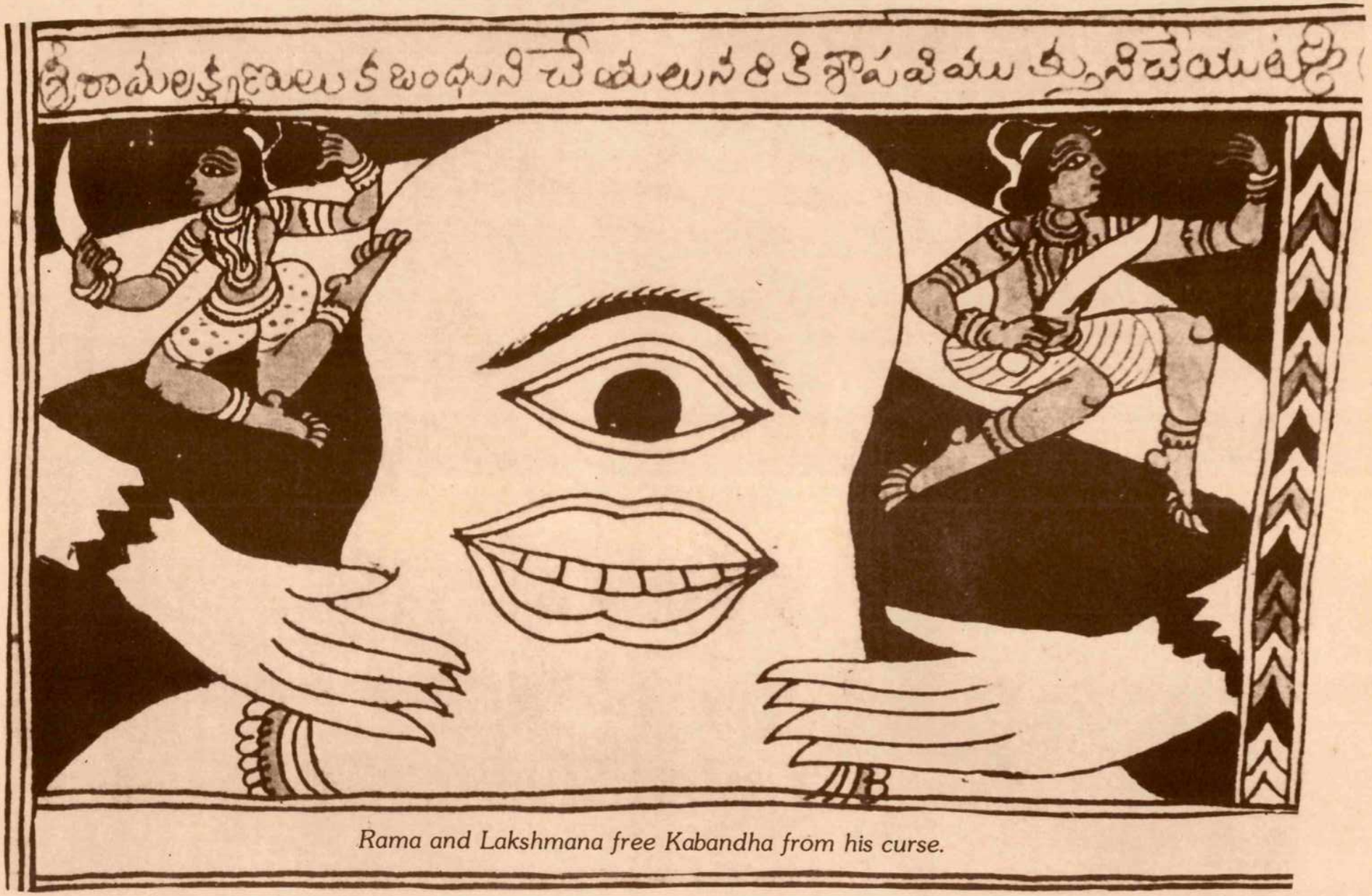

Rama and Lakshmana free Kabandha from his curse.

BAKELITE HYLAM

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Sabari gives berries to Rama who eats them heartily to her great delight.

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Hanuman greets Rama.

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Hanuman and Sugreeva offer help to Rama.

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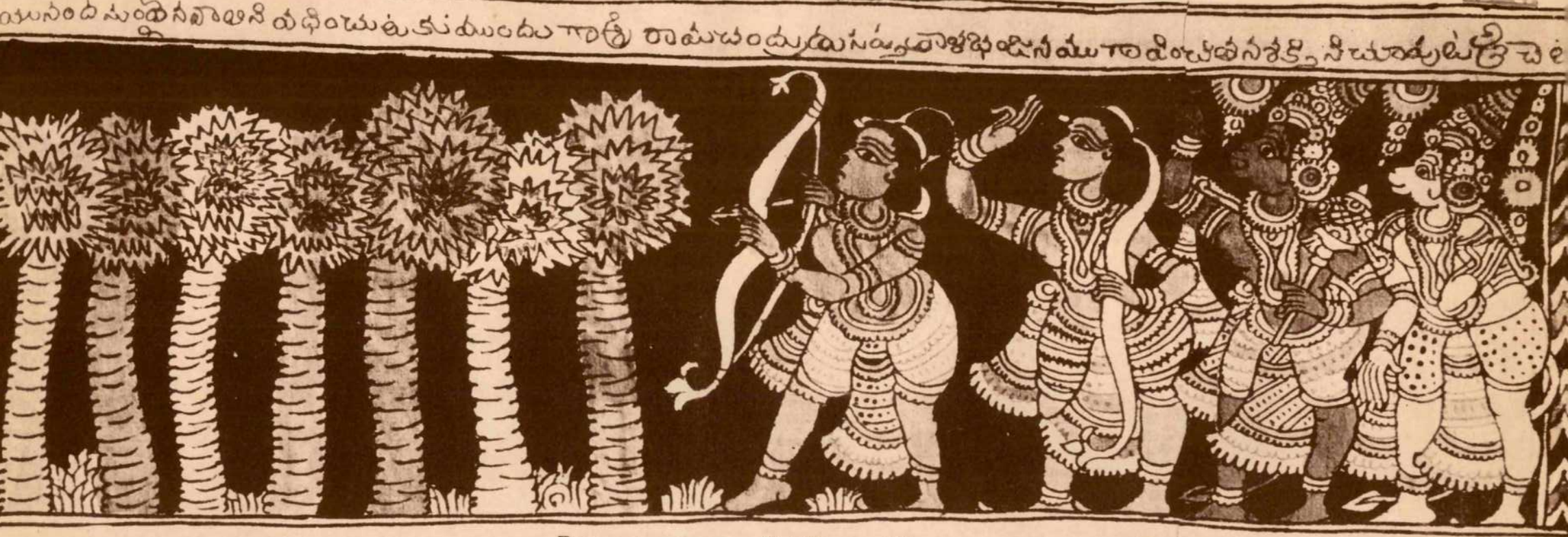

Rama pierces seven Sal Trees with one arrow.

VOLTAS LIMITED

Rama shoots down Vali.

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Rama gives signet ring to Hanuman.

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India's largest selling refrigerator

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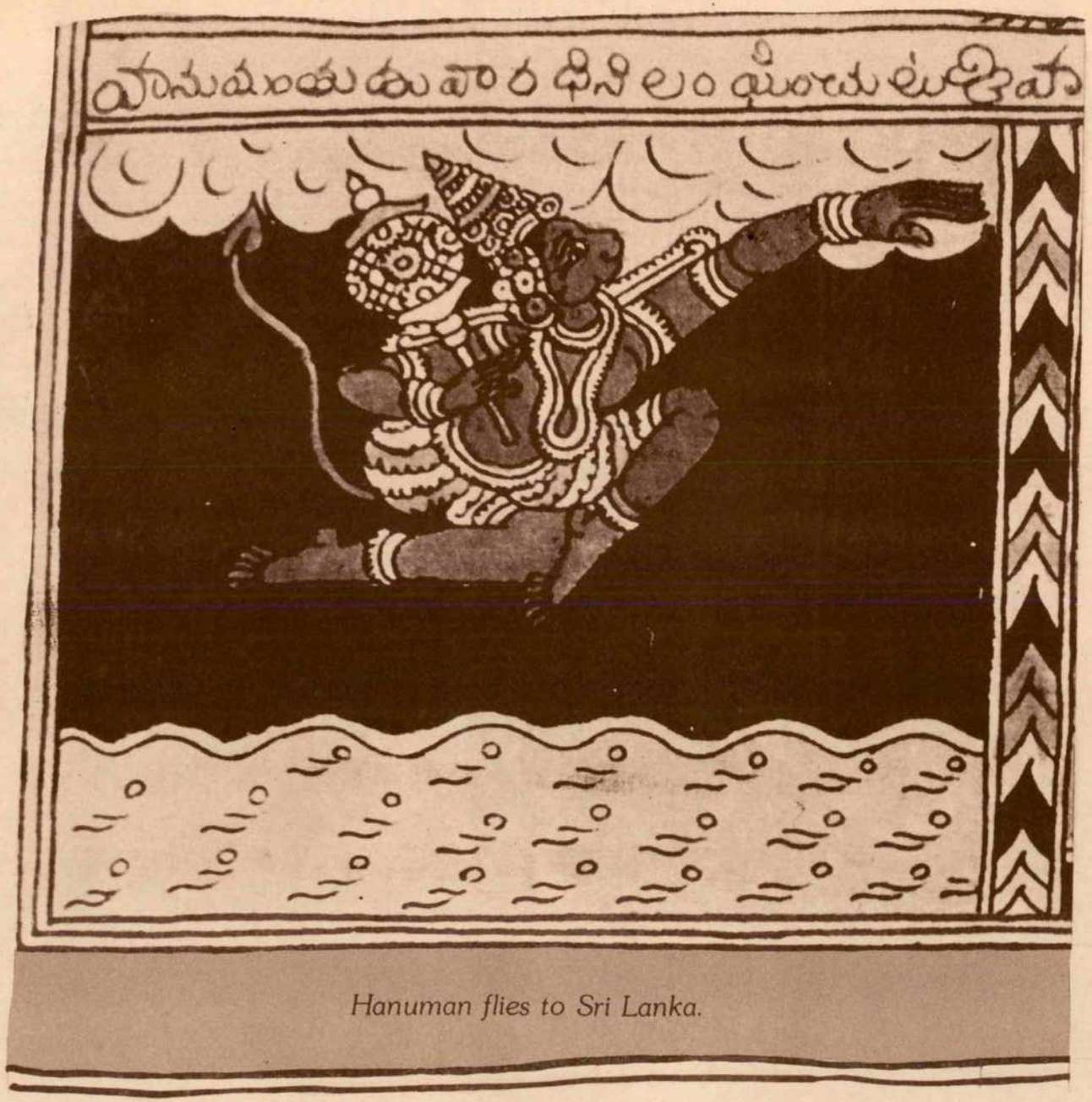

Hanuman flies to Sri Lanka.

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Hanuman kills Lankini.

Hanuman gives Rama's ring to Sita.

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Spinning & Manufacturing Company Limited
(CENTURY—FOR 100% COTTON TEXTILES)

INDUSTRIAL PERFUMES LIMITED

Hanuman advises Ravana to send Sita back to Rama.

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Rakshasas catch Hanuman's tail and set it ablaze.

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NAGARJUNA HILLS, HYDERABAD 500 004.

Hanuman sets Lanka on fire.

DIRECTORATE GENERAL
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Hanuman gives Sita's signet ring to Rama.

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Vibhishana, Ravana's brother, goes over to Rama and is given asylum.

Godrej®

Rama and Hanuman build a bridge to cross over to Lanka.

beml a great movement BHARAT EARTH MOVERS LIMITED

Rama with the help of the monkeys, kills Kumbhakarna, Ravana's brother.

MAHALAKSHMI GLASS WORKS (P) LTD.
SANATNAGAR, HYDERABAD 500 018

Hanuman uproots and brings Dronagiri,
the medicinal herbs on it, to revive Lakshmana.

TRADE WINGS LIMITED

Lakshmana severs the head of Indrajit, son of Ravana.

The Andhra Pradesh State Handloom Weavers
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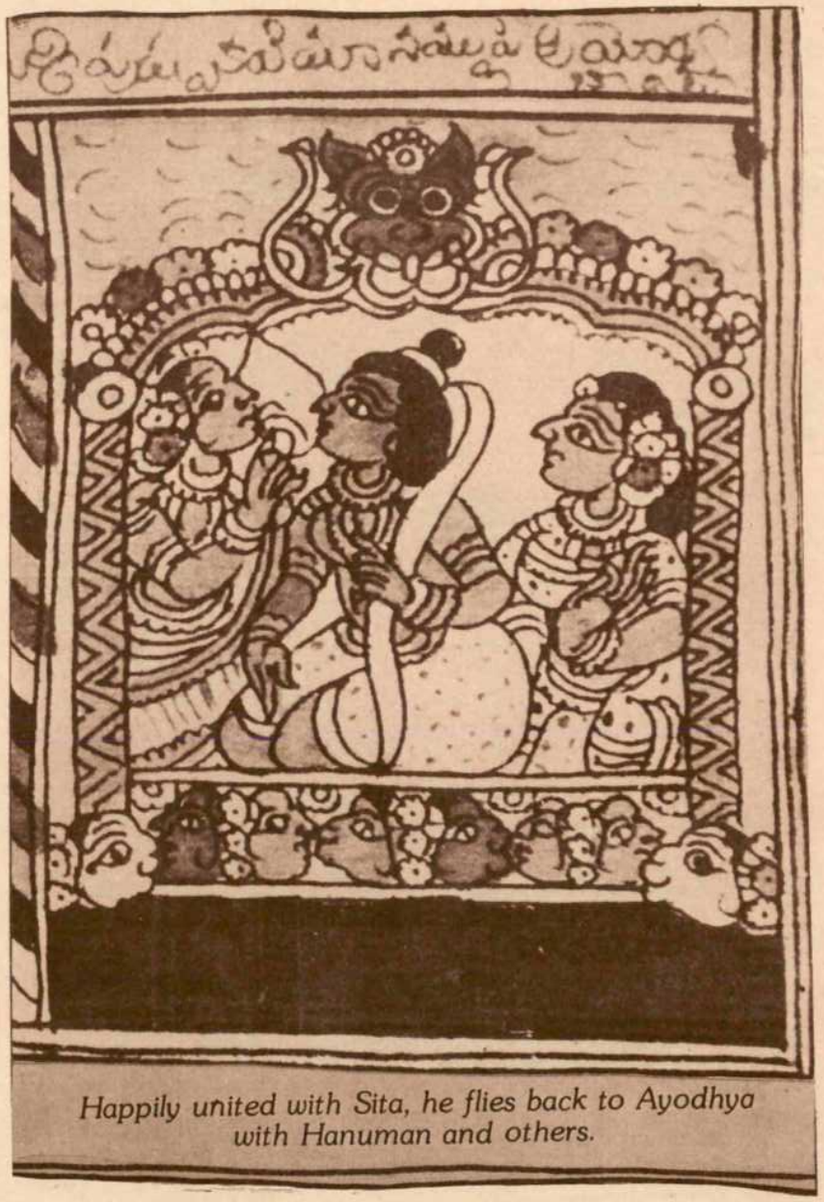
WEAVERS' HOUSE, NARAYANGUDA, HYDERABAD-500 029.

In a fierce battle, Rama kills Ravana.



Happily united with Sita, he flies back to Ayodhya with Hanuman and others.

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